This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

The Children's Educational Theatre

Alice Minnie Herts Heniger

Digitized by Google

Thr 166.7

Harvard College Library

FROM THE GIFT OF

JOHN CRAIG

OF BOSTON

FOR BOOKS RELATING TO THE THEATRE

Digitized by Google

9s—

16/7

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Alice Minnie Herts

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

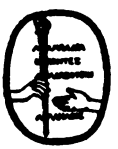
Digitized by Google

THE CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL THEATRE

BY
ALICE MINNIE HERTS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
CHARLES W. ELIOT
PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ILLUSTRATED
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMXI

Digitized by Google

Thr 166.7

HARVARD COLLEGE
JUL 18 1916
LIBRARY

Gift of
John Craig

COPYRIGHT, 1911, BY HARPER & BROTHERS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PUBLISHED OCTOBER, 1911

Digitized by Google

DEDICATED TO THE REVERED MEMORY OF MY PARENTS, FOUNDERS OF MANY PHILANTHROPIES, AND VALIANT WORKERS, BOTH OF THEM, IN RIGHTEOUS HUMANITARIAN CAUSES

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	Preface	ix
	Introduction by Charles W. Eliot	xiii
I.	Cutting a safe channel for a hitherto undirected stream of energy. Production of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," and the reasons therefor	1
II.	The universality of dramatic instinct. The essential difference in the method of guiding dramatic instinct *versus* dramatic talent	8
III.	Making the neighborhood people their own entertainers. Production of "The Little Princess" and "The Forest Ring" for children at a series of Sunday matinées	13
IV.	The development of the numerous casts for each play. A brief outline of method of production. "As You Like It" and "Ingomar" produced	21
V.	"Snowwhite"—its playing value to lads ranging in age from seven to fourteen. "Fauntleroy"—the tough lad's interest in the hero's power of accomplishment through chivalrous manners and tact.	27
VI.	The educational value of melodrama illustrated by our production of "The Prince and the Pauper"	34
VII.	The use of dramatic instinct to develop resourcefulness, good taste, and discrimination. Some concrete examples of the same	42
VIII.	A valuable social and a necessary musical secondary or by-product of the Children's Theatre	52
IX.	The stimulation of dramatic instinct toward purposeful play used as a preventive of crime	59
X.	The developed audience a necessary foundation of the endowed theatre	68

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
XI.	The Sunday closing and the incorporation of The Educational Theatre for Children and Young People. A brief summary of what it accomplished	76
XII.	The Dramatic Instinct of the Young Child, and Its Satisfaction—The Activity of the Dramatic Instinct During Adolescence. Excerpts from Lectures delivered by Percival Chubb and G. Stanley Hall	86
XIII.	The Development of the Humanities in the Greek, the Elizabethan and the Poetic Drama. Excerpts from Lectures delivered by Franklin S. Sargent, George P. Baker, and Percy MacKaye	109
XIV.	The Drama in its Relation to Education. Excerpt from Lecture delivered by James J. Walsh	129
XV.	A brief suggestion of what the endowed Educational Theatre will accomplish	143

Digitized by Google

ILLUSTRATIONS

ALICE MINNIE HERTS . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"THE TEMPEST" . . . . . *Facing p.* 6

"THE LITTLE PRINCESS" . . . . . " 16

"THE FOREST RING" . . . . . " 18

SCENE-SHIFTERS AT WORK . . . . . " 22

"AS YOU LIKE IT" . . . . . " 24

"SNOWWHITE" . . . . . " 30

"LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY" . . . . . " 32

"THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER" . . . . . " 38

PARENTS' MEETING . . . . . " 54

ORCHESTRA CLASS . . . . . " 58

THE SHUT-OUT AUDIENCE . . . . . " 68

AN AUDIENCE AT THE PLAY "SNOWWHITE" . . . " 72

"A COMÉDIE ROYAL" . . . . . " 88

"EDITHA'S BURGLAR" . . . . . " 126

"'OP-O'-ME-THUMB" . . . . . " 146

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTION

MISS HERTS'S seven years of work in the Children's Educational Theatre have proved that a strong educational force, for the most part unutilized in American schools, can be exercised through the wise training of the strong dramatic instinct in children. She has given a practical demonstration on a large scale of a good method of imparting ethical instruction through stimulation of emotions that prompt to persistent personal action. She has proved that children, acting appropriate plays, can provide suitable and welcome entertainment for their parents and friends, young or old. She has therefore shown how to impart to children by the hundred a strong interest in intellectual and moral work, and at the same time shown how to impart to them the means of giving pleasure to other people in a safe and wholesome way. This interest and this power will last through life and be continuous sources of real satisfaction.

All American schools need to study the processes of the Children's Educational Theatre and adapt them to ordinary day-school conditions. Teachers of English, settlement workers, managers of winter clubs and summer camps can profitably study Miss Herts's

Digitized by Google

methods, particularly her methods of training her young actors, enlisting several casts for each play, selecting appropriate plays, and producing them in an inexpensive manner, while all the time trying to develop the children's imaginations by making them understand the settings of the plays in which they act and sympathize with the characters they assume. Miss Herts in this book describes, in all necessary detail, her methods and processes, and the principles on which they are founded. Those who read her interesting descriptions with care will discover that her work was not done for children alone. It touched beneficently the parents and grown-up friends also. All good school-work ought in like manner to reach the parents through the children, particularly in the lessons on hygiene, co-operation, manners, and ethics.

One of the most interesting passages in the book is Miss Herts's prophecy, near its end, concerning the part which a children's educational theatre might play in all schools and all cities.

CHARLES W. ELIOT

Digitized by Google

PREFACE

UPON every suitable occasion I have, with conviction, coincided in the opinion of a character, called the disagreeable man, in Beatrice Harridan's little romance, *Ships that Pass in the Night*, who voices this sentiment: "If every one who wrote books now would be satisfied to dust books already written, what a regenerated world it would become!" I am also imbued with the idea that people should practise what they preach, and so this preface is merely to explain the reason for adding still another volume to the many to be dusted.

During seven years of activity in founding and carrying on the work of The Children's Educational Theatre many requests came to me to put my pen to paper to give educators and others who were interested some written account of what was being done. To this I usually replied: "The performances we are giving best speak for themselves. If the educational principles behind the mere productions do not carry across the footlights, I should say they were fallacious and did not exist. Come and see for yourself!" And, unless the distance was too far, the insistent ones came, saw, and were conquered. In many cases people wrote of what they saw, and it was often my

Digitized by Google

pleasure to help any sincere and understanding writer in the preparation of an article concerning the work.

After working for The Children's Educational Theatre for six years in the Educational Alliance, and but one year as a separate incorporation, I was taken gravely ill, suffering from a breakdown from overwork, and was obliged to submit to an enforced rest. Since the organization was left without a head, the directors had no choice but to dissolve it, and this was done in August, 1909.

During a year's absence abroad a great number of letters, by actual count over three hundred, came from all parts of the United States and from Europe, requestingi nformation in regard to The Children's Educational Theatre. After my complete restoration to health these many epistles were given to me, and I find that they came, for the most part, from teachers of English in colleges and schools, from settlement-club workers, probation court officers, playwrights, and from intelligent persons in various professions who earnestly desired help in training that vital force —dramatic instinct. In many cases college men and women write to explain their need of help, having chosen The Children's Educational Theatre as a subject for theses, and any doubt I may have had of the sincerity of my questioners was resolved by the fact that in no case did they fail to enclose ample postage for reply.

The service of my secretary, who had been with me from the inception of the work, ceased with its

Digitized by Google

dissolution, and daily I am obliged to reply to inquiries which almost every day's mail still contains.

I ardently wish that I could reply as formerly—"Come and see for yourself"—but I cannot, because The Children's Educational Theatre is at present not operating, for a very simple but sufficient reason—lack of financial support. Many of its original workers are ready and eager to continue. Our storehouse of plays suitable for the young has been largely increased. We have a history of seven years of unusual success in practical work. We have the cordial endorsement of the best among the conservative and radical educators of the country. The lay public realizes the need of suitable dramatic entertainment for the character-forming period of youth. A Children's Theatre whose ideal is financial success will merely defeat its own righteous ends. It needs a subsidy as much as a school or a college, and it needs a board of intelligent directors who shall administer its finances with complete understanding of its policy.

It is my hope that this book, in addition to being of practical assistance to educators who realize the urgent necessity of utilizing the child's dramatic instinct along rational constructive lines, and desire so to use it, may also lead some philanthropic man or woman, or group of such, to further investigation, with the view of founding in New York the first Children's Educational Theatre to serve as a model for the further development of the movement.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL THEATRE

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL THEATRE

I

Cutting a safe channel for a hitherto undirected stream of energy. Production of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," and the reasons therefor.

THE Children's Educational Theatre did not develop to demonstrate a pedagogical theory, but simply to supply a hitherto unsupplied though universal demand—the demand of children and young people for interesting entertainment. No permanent commercial enterprise of high character has ever met this demand, though the managers of cheap vaudeville shows and five-cent moving-picture theatres draw a remunerative clientele, chiefly of school children and young men and women, by utilizing the insatiable desire of youth to "see a show." These managers naturally do not know the psychological reason which collects these large audiences of children, but every educator knows that children and young people constantly and passionately desire to see the abstract pictures of their imagination realized

Digitized by Google

in concrete form. The educator also knows that as the twig of imagination is bent so is the tree of sentiment inclined, and a thrill of response to true and healthy sentiment is the first requisite for character growth, and development. In the child the twig of imagination is tender and pliable, ready to respond to sentiments of valor, heroism, and truth. The child's imagination responds to false and maudlin sentiment only when nothing else is offered. I believe the commercial manager to be entirely honest when he says that the mature public is receiving exactly what it demands in its theatres; but this can never be said of the child, who, though eagerly accepting anything, is ready to adopt the highest ideals of life and conduct embodied in the form of plays. Yet in America the theatre has failed to obtain proper recognition as a factor in large educational movements. Without aid of the imaginative faculty the intellect becomes barren, colorless, mechanical. Dramatic instinct is a vitally focussed phase of the imagination whereby the vague pictures of the mind become tangible and tend to take form and place in the environment. This universal instinct is at the root of the creative impulses of mental and spiritual life. Froebel made use of it in the kindergarten to develop the baby mind, and I had always marvelled why this same instinct, with its tremendous field of opportunity, had not been organized by the educator to meet the increasing need of the adolescent as well as the child mind. In the moving-picture theatres and the cheap

Digitized by Google

vaudeville shows managerial thrift turns to commercial profit the child's fixed determination to seek and find satisfaction for its dramatic instinct. The educator has not turned to educational profit the same instinct.

Realizing the possibility of fertilizing this hitherto neglected field, and having assured myself through many years of social work that abstract theory unattached to practice is almost valueless, when the opportunity came to me to manage the entertainment department of a large institution I recognized in it a timely occasion for useful work in an untried direction. The institution was the Educational Alliance at Jefferson Street and East Broadway, New York City, operated with the object of Americanizing the Russian and Polish Jewish immigrants who people that section of the city. The Educational Alliance has various departments: a department of religious work, a department of domestic science, classes in English for recently arrived immigrants, and an entertainment department.

While the entertainment department had existed for many years, its activities had not received any special attention, since the organization acquiesced in the general view that entertainment is merely a luxury and not a necessity in people's lives. To get religion and to acquire learning were necessary, but entertainment might be picked up in a more haphazard fashion. I inherited a budget which outlined a number of concerts by professional musicians, en-

Digitized by Google

tertainments by amateurs, and prestidigitator acts for children. The Educational Alliance has an auditorium seating nine hundred, and it was also my work to rent this hall any evenings it was not used for Alliance entertainments, synagogue, or Board of Education lectures.

The greatest rental demand proved to be for amateur dramatic entertainments and concerts by clubs of young people and companies of older people. The plays most in vogue were "The Bells," "Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," "Hamlet," and "Ghosts." The elders gave their plays in the Yiddish or the Italian language, according to their nationality, the young folks in what in their vigor and enthusiasm they believed to be the English language. The concerts were by neighborhood societies, who dispensed something which they and their audiences naïvely but truthfully thought was music.

Only two sets of scenery were available, an interior and an exterior, but as long as the people could get on the stage and act they were as perfectly willing to play "Hamlet" in a Harlem flat interior as they were to gown Ophelia in a twentieth-century hired wedding-dress. The hall was always filled, the audiences always pleased. Night after night for three months I attended these plays and concerts, both behind the scenes and in the auditorium, and thus I learned my lesson, that dramatic instinct is a primitive impulse, so deeply rooted that its fostering in the right direction may be organized to any and every

Digitized by Google

educational result. I saw the great opportunity not to impose upon people an ideal from without, but to help people to create an ideal from within.

To educate along the line of least resistance by utilizing the eager craving of man, woman, and child to realize the meaning of lives totally apart from their own restricted environment, I decided to combine and organize all these dramatic clubs, and with the material at hand to make a production of Shakespeare's "Tempest." The play was chosen because its scenes are laid in Nature's own abode, significant contrast to the tall and forbidding tenements of the neighborhood—because it teaches the lesson of the majesty and simplicity of nature and the nobility of forgiveness.

To assist in class work looking toward production I engaged Emma S. Fry, who had taught in Franklin Sargent's American Academy of Dramatic Art, and who had experienced several years of stage work.

A sign placed on the outside of the building announced a production of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," and requested applications for parts in the play. About three hundred and fifty young people—department store assistants, clerks, stenographers, and operators—responded, and the play was read to them. After the play had been read a number of typewritten copies of each part were distributed, and several evenings were spent in discussion, founded on text, not on opinion, of the meaning of each character in its relation to other characters in the play, to the plot, and to the history of the period.

Digitized by Google

Rehearsals followed, and we produced the play in six months. We could not meet the demand for seats for the one performance scheduled, so we decided to give two performances; and to assure these two performances we prepared two casts.

Very little money was available for costumes, but the neighborhood storekeepers were interested to supply materials at cost, and we readily secured the volunteer services of many of the young girls and their mothers to help make costumes. The second-cast people were detailed to shift scenery, properties, and work lights for the first cast, and vice versa.

During the months of preparation Shakespeare's play was indeed creating a veritable tempest in the neighborhood. Word came from the two public libraries near by that volumes of Shakespeare were all out and many people unsupplied. Parents of the young people wanted to read the play which their children were going to perform, and so, by arrangement with a publisher, a good paper-covered edition was placed on sale in my office at ten cents a copy, and one thousand copies were sold in less than a month. All characters, with the exception of Ariel, were intrusted to people over eighteen. Ariel was played by a boy of twelve and a girl of the same age. The little girl who was ready to play Ariel said to me, "All the people in this neighborhood know about 'Tempest,' and them that don't, I tell them." It looked as though this work was going to prove an integrating influence between foreign-born parent and

STEPHANO: "Here's my comfort."

Digitized by Google

"THE TEMPEST." (*Produced 1903.*)
STEPHANO: "*Here's my comfort.*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

American-born child. A new bond of family interest was suggested, and that was well, because so much of social work among immigrants is disintegrating to the family circle, the child adopting what he believes to be a new form of democracy which cannot include the foreign-born parent.

The auditorium was sold out weeks in advance of the production, and at the two performances the first and second casts played to packed houses of parents, relatives, friends, and others attracted merely by announcement of the play.

Digitized by Google

II

The universality of dramatic instinct. The essential difference in the method of guiding dramatic instinct *versus* dramatic talent.

THE production of "The Tempest" brought to light two distinct popular demands, the one for better entertainment than cheap vaudeville afforded, the other for self-expression through plays, and I pondered long how best to help the neighborhood people in their desire to help themselves along these lines.

The first necessity was a better stage and general equipment, for "The Tempest" had been played on a speakers' platform, with scenery tacked up, and during one act held up by willing hands.

I devoted the summer of 1904 to raising the necessary money, and to having a suitable stage built in the limited space at my disposal.

The erection of the new stage increased the demand for auditorium rental by amateur dramatic clubs, and the members of these organizations who had witnessed our production of "The Tempest" always requested my assistance with their plays. In this way I came into natural, unforced relations with the people who voluntarily approached me for practical help in various ways. Their requests were in the beginning only

Digitized by Google

for costumes and properties. For example: one group of boys who represented a dramatic club in one of the public-school recreation centres had studied "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" among themselves, and were all ready to go on—indeed the house was sold out before they came to dress and scene rehearsal. The committee detailed to make final arrangements with me said, "We wish you'd help us with our play; we want a spot." I said: "What do you want a spot light for? We have none, but I might be able to get one for you." The boys answered: "We want a spot to t'row on Dr. Jekyll. When de spot's on him it's Jekyll, and when de spot's off it's Hyde. De spot's de hull t'ing."

I ventured, somewhat apologetically, since I was not engaged to run the show, that perhaps there might be some difference in the nature of the two men; and, using the boys' copy of the play, I outlined just a slight suggestion of the dual personality of Jekyll and Hyde. The boys, I found, were intensely interested; they listened to my every word with genuine, unfeigned attention and finally said, "Well, if dat's so, we'd like to know a lot more about it."

This outreach on the people's part for help "to know a lot more about it" was greatly encouraging, for it showed that many who failed to respond to any formal educational method could, through their great desire to act and to see plays, be intimately reached in a fashion certain of result; therefore I afforded all the help possible to these dramatic organizations

Digitized by Google

who rented the hall, while I carefully watched their methods, which were similar throughout. The "star system" had infected their ranks, and those cast for the leading parts were young people whose personality had been exploited from earliest school-days. These were the ones who attended to the business details in connection with their plays, sort of actor-managers, and so I came into constant touch with them.

Despite protestations by friends and relatives of their unusual dramatic talent, I found them in possession of nothing more than the ordinary dramatic instinct common to all, which had, moreover, been perverted and misused by ignorant "elocution teachers," who had not helped them to any understanding of the characters they wished to portray, but who had merely taught them to mechanically learn lines and make gestures. No growth whatever had taken place in these young people, because no attempt had been made to develop their imaginations, and their outreach toward comprehension of new people and new environment had been rendered valueless both to themselves and to their audiences.

Through failure to recognize the use to which dramatic instinct should be put in the education of youth, unequipped teachers had encouraged these children to act parts which they could not possibly understand, and I saw that unintelligent direction had actually stifled instead of advancing development through this urge of the imaginative life.

These neighborhood elocution teachers were not

Digitized by Google

unique in failing to realize the difference between dramatic instinct and dramatic talent, for experience has shown me that ignorance of the laws relating both to education and life is very general.

Dramatic talent being a special uncommon gift bestowed upon the limited few, the educator is not concerned to develop it in its relation to life and character, because its use is merely to specialize the actor for his business and art of acting. It is a particularized faculty drawn out and stimulated, that its output may be effective for an audience and of commercial and artistic value. The teacher of dramatic art is not expected to relate the operation of dramatic instinct to the character development of the actor. It is his business to push the specialized imaginative faculty to the most speedy securing of certain desired artistic and commercial effects for the interest of an audience, and he need not be concerned with the result effected in the life of the actor through the stimulation of dramatic talent.

On the other hand, the educator is in every way concerned with the results obtained in the development of the human being through the stimulation of dramatic instinct, and he must guard against the stimulation of this heaven-implanted impulse by those void of understanding regarding its powers for weal as well as for woe.

By constantly helping the young people who composed the numerous dramatic clubs it was easy for me to realize the harm which had been effected through

Digitized by Google

desultory ignorant excitement of their impulse, as well as the good which might be effected by placing them in conscious communication with their own divine instinct, to the end of bringing about that which nature had designed should thereby be accomplished.

Digitized by Google

III

Making the neighborhood people their own entertainers. Production of "The Little Princess" and "The Forest Ring" for children at a series of Sunday matinées.

TO develop character by joining work with interest seemed a genial educational method; its possibilities foreshadowed practical results. Some great principle appeared to be involved in this craving for recreation on the part of both audience and player. Perhaps it was to mean not mere catering to a passion for diversion, but to a latent desire for *recreation* in the true sense of the word. For recreation, for self-expression, the principle seemed operative both sides of the footlights. Perhaps it was an economic force which might include both audience and player.

Perhaps it was a greater opportunity than had at first appeared. The possibility of educating the discriminative faculty by continuing to make young people something better than mere passive recipients of entertainment seemed so great that I decided to train young people of the neighborhood to produce a series of plays for audiences of children and young people, thus making the district responsible for the standard of its own entertainment.

For the first season I outlined a series of matinées

Digitized by Google

for children at which "The Little Princess," by Frances Hodgson Burnett, and "The Forest Ring," by William de Mille, should be performed; and a series of evening performances for adults at which "Ingomar" and "As You Like It" should be given. I was willing to undertake this plan with very little money, for I had succeeded in interesting author and manager friends, who offered practical co-operation.

The directors of the Alliance naturally put the questions: "Will such training lead children and young people to the adoption of the professional stage as a career? Will it unsettle their minds for the serious business of life?" In reply I could only voice my own belief that dramatic instinct is a universal impulse whose intelligent direction serves to fit young people for better equipment in life—my belief that the opportunity to play out a primitive impulse might serve to keep young people *off* the professional stage. I also pointed out that complex elements treated as a whole in plays would be easier to grasp and would gain more instant response from both audience and player than mere abstract qualities isolated and in detail.

Besides which, multitudes of young folks had for years been producing plays in this neighborhood either completely without direction or under direction totally inadequate, and it was perfectly clear that they intended to continue so doing. It was merely a question of how the plays should be given and whether the results of their efforts should be worthy or otherwise.

Digitized by Google

After much discussion it was decided to put on the proposed plays, and rehearsals for the children began in July, 1904, and continued throughout the summer under the direction of Jacob Heniger, a man who had been attracted to the work through his belief in the necessity for good entertainment for children. To these rehearsals during the long summer evenings the children and young people brought a zest, an enthusiastic vigor, such as I have never seen displayed even at a children's party. Here was a large group of young folks working through their holiday season for the mere love of the work, and hundreds more clamoring to share in it. The whole fabric of make-believe, the play, focussed a central point of impulse stirred to action. I noted that it was always the desire to play the part which stimulated the youthful players, inducing them to acquire, through suggestion a true insight into the characters they desired to portray, and I began to foreshadow the tremendous moral and artistic uplift which might be brought to bear through the righteous and cleverly directed utilization of this universal desire to "act out," to "pretend," to "play it is."

It seemed right that feeling should precede and prepare the way for knowledge, and also that the accumulation of knowledge should serve some more worthy end than the mere preparation of an executive examination paper.

As I watched these children and young people under Mr. Heniger's careful and patient direction arrive at an

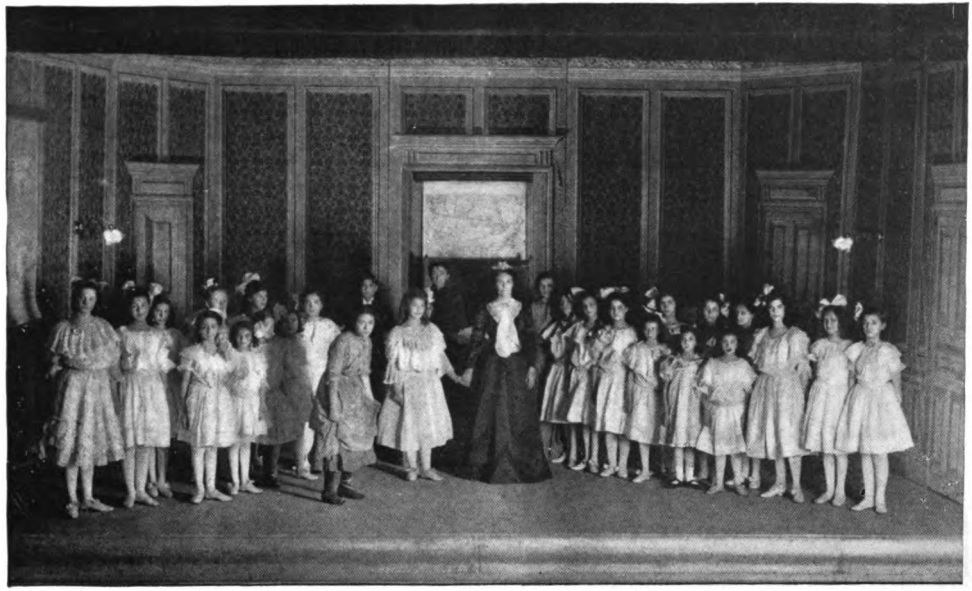
Digitized by Google

understanding of the characters they desired to relive, I realized Herbert Spencer's scientific assurance that "mere cognition does not affect conduct," and that "behavior is not determined by knowledge but by emotion." Had I perhaps, in my earnest desire to give good entertainment to the young, fallen upon a possible system of ethical instruction for the forming mind? I approached this query with a sincere prayer for help and direction of my own meagre understanding of this universal, God-given dramatic instinct which appealed to me for help and control, and while so doing I proceeded with my preparations for the production of the plays; "do the work and ye shall know the doctrine."

From the first I determined that all details of scenery, properties, and costume should be carried out correctly, so that every play might prove a real object lesson both to audience and player. The result of this, explained in succeeding chapters, will show the inestimable value of this method which reaches the intimate life of the people as it could be reached in no other way.

The oft-proffered services of the volunteer club director I was never able to use in this work, because I sensed the fact that dramatic impulse was too serious a force to be directed by other than the most intelligently trained methods, which methods gradually evolved as the work of rehearsal progressed. Instead of giving the children lines to memorize, and then proceeding to show them how to act out the part as

Digitized by Google



"THE LITTLE PRINCESS," ACT I. (*Produced 1904.*)
SARA CREWE: "*And I thank you for coming to my party.*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

their stage director interpreted its meaning, we spent the time evolving from each player his interpretation of the character and in developing the player's instinct of responsiveness to the situation and environment.

The way was long but justified in the result, for each player came to performance with an intelligent understanding of the relation of his assumed character to every other character in the play, and instead of giving a mechanical performance the youthful players acted with zest, spontaneity, and great charm.

Each succeeding performance was a veritable event for the thirty children who danced and sang so happily at gentle Sara Crewe's birthday party, and the interest of the fairy tale which the young heroine tells to her little companions grouped about the hearth in the flickering firelight gleams never palled, because each production meant for these youthful players some hours of a new and interesting life. When Mrs. Burnett came to the Alliance one Sunday afternoon to see her play "The Little Princess" enacted by these children of immigrant parents her enthusiasm knew no bounds. She marvelled, as have so many neighborhood school-teachers since, at the clean, intelligent, interesting delivery of English.

Tickets, exchangeable with five cents at the box-office for seats, were sent to a different public school each week, a certain number of tickets being reserved for distribution by probation court officers.

The choice of subject-matter for school compositions all ran to the plays seen at the Educational Alliance,

Digitized by Google

and many of the school principals, knowing our interest in the effect upon the large audiences, sent the compositions to us. One child wrote, "I like Sara Crewe because she speaks her words as though they were her own words, out of her own heart." And another, "I like the play because the sceneries is proper for the place." Another: "I liked best where Sara Crewe got her imaginings when the garret was made into a palace. It's nice when children get their imaginings." I believe my readers will agree heartily with this philosophy. It *is* nice when children get their imaginings and when the garret is transformed into a palace even though the child may be afoot with his dreams only in the pictured story and for a little time.

In the "Forest Ring" was presented a lesson of kindness and humanity toward animals reinforced by the dramatic values of the story. A mother bear petitions the fairy of the forest for the return of her three cubs who have been taken by a hunter and are held in the cellar of a farm-house at which a little city girl is passing her vacation. This child is brought by the fairies to the charmed Forest Ring, and there held as hostage for the return of the cubs. Every child in the audience felt responsible for the return of the three little cubs stolen by Hank the hunter, and the fact that the cubs were impersonated by various small brothers and sisters of the spectators made it especially important that they should be returned alive.

Digitized by Google

"THE FOREST RING," ACT II. (*Produced 1904.*)
MOSSBUD: "*Awake!*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The desire to enact various parts in the play suggested many physical exercises requisite for the character, as, for example, several youths who were desirous of enacting the bear went frequently to the Zoölogical Gardens in Bronx Park to study and practise the characteristic movements of bruin, while the girls tried to trip about lightly and gracefully to exemplify their notion of fairies. The physical exercise seemed always to be suggested by the mental and spiritual attitude toward the assumed character, and thus there was no mechanical learning of lines. The sense of kinship with the character, the feeling which involved its creation from within, were appealed to, and the character gradually took concrete human shape. By the time people came to dress rehearsal the lines were known.

A neighborhood school-principal once asked one of the young men players whom she knew when he learned his lines, as he worked in a shop every day and all day long. After several moments of reflection he replied, "I guess I learn my lines when I go up and down town in the cars and at lunch-hour and in the evenings, because that's when I think of my characters."

Desire spurred invention and awakened mentality broadened into moral susceptibility. New interest constantly fostered new endeavor through the knowledge that all this activity was not to be left vague and purposeless, but was to be used for definite purpose—the production of a play. A desire to do was stimu-

Digitized by Google

lated by doing, by creating. Thus no effort was to be wasted, and no laziness or indifference balked effort. Confidence was established in the value of the smallest thing well done, whether that thing was tacking down a floor cloth or playing a leading part.

Digitized by Google

IV

The development of the numerous casts for each play. A brief outline of method of production. "As You Like It" and "Ingomar" produced.

THE demand on the audience's side of our footlights would have been met for the entire season by matinée and evening performances of "The Little Princess," but the same instinct which led the audience through the front door of our theatre brought them also through our stage door with requests to study this or that part which they had watched from the front so carefully that, in many instances, they had memorized entire scenes. This awakened me to the necessity of forming classes where every part in every play might be studied by half a dozen different persons.

This method, evolved to meet the players' need, met also our constantly growing audience demand for an increased number of performances which the numerous casts supplied without too great taxation of individual players.

Wholesome competition was stimulated by the natural decision that the one who was ready first with the character interpretation should play in the first

Digitized by Google

cast, while the first player helped in the development of the second, and so on through the various casts.

At each performance a list of the first, second, and emergency casts was posted on the call-board outside the dressing-rooms, and each player, first, second, and third, was obliged to sign the hour of his arrival opposite his name. The first cast would immediately dress and make up, and if any first-cast member were absent fifteen minutes before the first curtain call the second had a right to the performance.

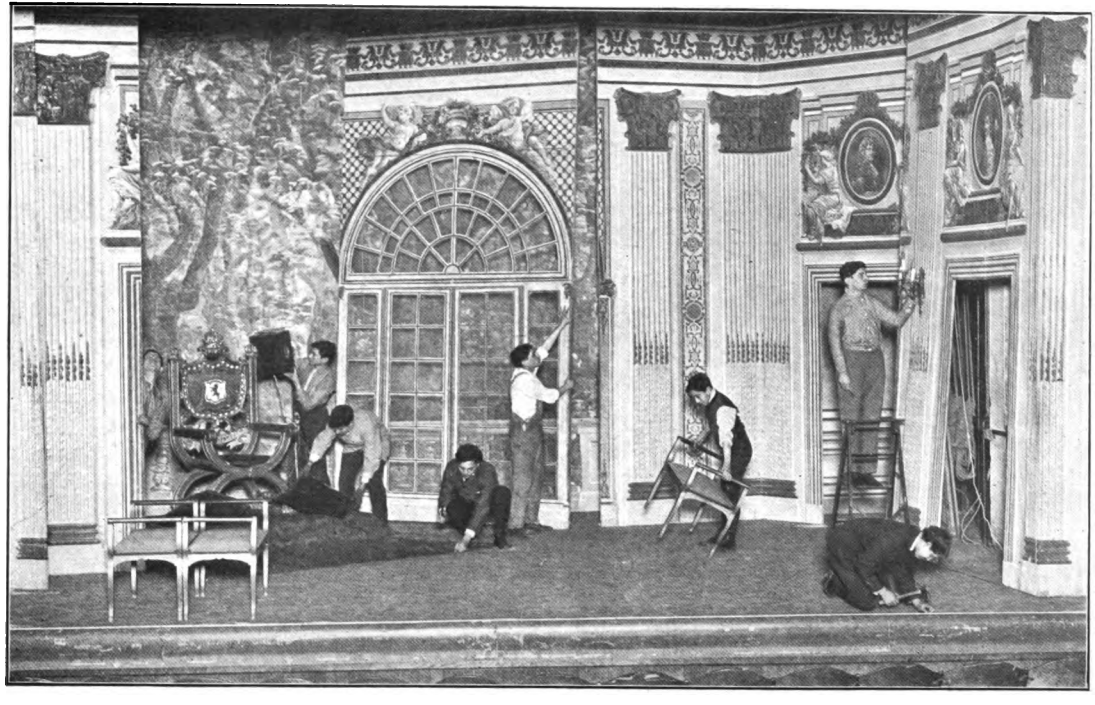
Running regular Sunday matinées for five years from October to June we had not half a dozen people who allowed their seconds to play. The second and the emergency cast at the rise of the curtain were permitted to enter the auditorium and to watch the performance with the object of taking notes as a help in class work.

Stage regulations were exactly similar to those employed in any first-class theatre.

Scene, property, and light rehearsals preceded stage rehearsals with the players, but it was necessary to see the performance of a play from the wings as well as from the front to fully realize the discipline of responsibility which the operation of this work brought to the people.

The play being scheduled to begin at 8.15 P.M., players, scene-shifters, property-men, costume-mistresses, and all assistants were called for 6.45. The stage being set for the first act, all the properties and furniture for all the acts were placed in their order of

Digitized by Google



SCENE-SHIFTERS AT WORK

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

use; ten minutes before the rise of the curtain the stage-director gave the signal to the orchestra, and then there was absolute silence on the stage, in order not to disturb the orchestra players while their part of the work was being attended to. On signal the call-boy tiptoed to the dressing-rooms to make his calls and the players called for the first scene took their places in the wings. When a boy acted as call-boy one week and as a character in the play the following week, when the one who handled properties used them some days later at performance, each realized the practical necessity of efficiency and promptness. At the fall of the curtain the players hurried to their dressing-rooms, the stage-director gave the signal to strike, and every scene-shifter and property man was instantly at work. Each one had learned exactly where to go and what to do, and there was never the slightest hurry or confusion.

It was always amazing to me to see the people carrying out this somewhat mechanical part of the performance with so much interest, yet to the boys no part of the work ever seemed mechanical, for each felt himself part of a worthy whole.

Although it was difficult to get the auditorium for evening performances, since it was used for many different purposes, we awoke to the necessity of putting on more plays to develop the people who were constantly being attracted.

Several elements were considered in selecting a play; its value to the audience, and also to the player; its

Digitized by Google

value as a production, and as a study; its power to represent a suitable ideal to the neighborhood; its power to suggest new thoughts to our players.

In view of all these things, "As You Like It" was the choice for our second Shakespearian production. Of this charming comedy it has been truthfully said the Bard of Avon has turned the philosophic eye inward on the mysteries of human nature, and while there are threatenings of tragedy in the beginning of the play, they are dissolved in an air in which purity, truth, and health serve to resolve the baser designs of men into harmless fantasies.

Produced as it was in the early spring-time, when Nature was just awakening from her long winter's sleep, the open-air feeling of the play lent it added value for people daily walled in store and factory. Numerous girls desired to play Rosalind, Celia, Phœbe, and Audrey—many men were aspirants for the parts of the Duke, Frederick, Oliver, and Orlando—and it seemed as though the instinct of sympathy with the human traits of these characters should be permitted to emerge out of the darkness and chaos of mere mental imagery into the clarifying brightness of action; but in the majority of cases the people's English was so unintelligible, their voices were so poor, their bearing so slovenly, that it was impossible to meet the obligation to our audiences with this material. Yet these were the very ones who deserved all the comfort and strength which come from spiritual fellowship with a higher type of human being.

Digitized by Google

"AS YOU LIKE IT." (*Produced 1904.*)
TOUCHSTONE: "*Then learn this of me.*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Here again desire spurred invention, and to secure their chance to play many strove to acquire the English of Orlando, the flexibility of Rosalind, the width of chest necessary for the wrestler, and so on. Where dull, cramped habit interfered, the player's *will* was kindled to stimulate action and the master's play received worthy interpretation in genuine sincerity of expression and in unself-conscious portrayal.

Church, school, and special philanthropic effort all struggle with the "sex problem." The theatre has always been recognized as a powerful influence in this field, for, while a superficial view of society may seem to belie the assurance that the higher life is really happier than the lower, every good play exemplifies the rigid connection between men's moral natures and their fortunes, and shows that fate is largely determined by character. The best preventive of vice is virtue, but in choice of plays we must also show youth that virtue is something far loftier than mere refraining from evil; our choice must fall upon plays which show with dramatic interest the constructive advantages of the pursuit of ideals.

"Ingomar" was our next choice for class study and production because it presented in adequate dramatic form a story of the evolution of a brute passion into an ideal love.

We could give but five evening performances of this play, being unable to secure the hall more often, though the play, which vitalized a bit of Grecian times, was charmingly acted and excellently staged. It

Digitized by Google

afforded opportunity to many girls whose backs were bent through long stooping over typewriting and sewing machines for unrestrained grace and freedom in flowing Greek robes, while many young men after long rehearsal wore the fleshings, skins, and armor of the period with a poise and dignity which reacted in the wearing of their every-day garments.

As the work broadened and developed I saw that the people were far too busy in class and rehearsal to afford any help in making costumes, and, as our funds were entirely inadequate for the purchase of suitable costumes, I succeeded in interesting Mr. Maurice Herrman, who had for years worked with Augustin Daly and who thoroughly understood the art of costuming periodic productions. While Mr. Herrman designed, cut, and prepared each costume, we profited by the services of young maids and matrons of the leisure class, who sewed for entire days until a costume production was completed. Thus many were able to help in the only practical way open to them in a work in which they had become interested.

Digitized by Google

V

"Snowwhite"—its playing value to lads ranging in age from seven to fourteen. "Fauntleroy"—the tough lad's interest in the hero's power of accomplishment through chivalrous manners and tact.

AT this point in the progress of class work and production an inestimably valuable truth came to our notice—namely, that children and young people whose minds could be reached in no other way, in their desire to enact characters, responded under instruction in the character to emotion and interest which stimulated the latent resources of their sluggish minds. The emotion experienced seemed to brighten and vitalize the mental images involved and make them enduring as nothing else had served to do for the slow, inhibitive child. We constantly found that dramatic instinct was present in and could animate the dullest, slowest child, and we tirelessly studied how to nurture the powerful instinct to that child's quickening, by guiding, not coercing; stimulating, not exciting; establishing relations, not specializing personality. The child's powerful interest in the newly evolved character released him from all sense of control or restriction and permitted free play to his initiative power. The play was our sole text-

Digitized by Google

book, so I cast about for more plays, and since the need of the children for good entertainment was even greater than that of their elders, the fairy tale in play form naturally was suggested. In the German "Schneewitchen" I found a fairly good stage arrangement of the entrancing tale of "Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs," and I secured the service of Marguerite Merington, playwright and author, to put it into English verse. She altered and elaborated the German version, and her play is as interesting to a mature as to a youthful audience.

"Snowwhite's" chief asset to our players was the great number of small boys we were able to use for the several casts of the dwarfs. The production was arduous and difficult on our small stage, with only a left exit, the scenery and effects had to be most carefully planned, the costumes so made that each might be worn by a number of different people, and I often chafed during the hot summer of 1905 at the physical disqualifications under which we worked; but it was only necessary to spend some time in a room crowded with street-urchins gathered for a "dwarf" rehearsal to reassure myself that no expense of time, thought, and energy could be too great to help forward this unique process of development through play.

It was perfectly delightful to watch the stimulated instinct of these youngsters leap to a realization of their duties as hosts when poor Snowwhite, "hungry, thirsty, weary, wet, and cold," seeks shelter in their hut. Forceful characteristics of these little men are

Digitized by Google

extreme neatness and deep reverence, slightly set forth in the following scrap of dialogue from the play; it takes place upon the return of the dwarfs from work, where supper awaits them in their hut:

BLICK

[*Leader of the dwarfs.*]

Three cheers for a good day's work—

THE OTHERS

Hur-rah, rah rah!

BLICK

Next, supper we will not shirk.

THE OTHERS

Right you are.

BLICK

But first we will wash hands and face.

THE OTHERS

So we will.

ALL

[*As each man washes he speaks.*]

Spick and span every man.

BLICK

[*After all have washed and are in line.*]

And now—supper.

ALL

Supper, supper.

BLICK

Nor eat till we've said our grace.

THE OTHERS

[*All remove caps and bow their heads in silent grace.*]

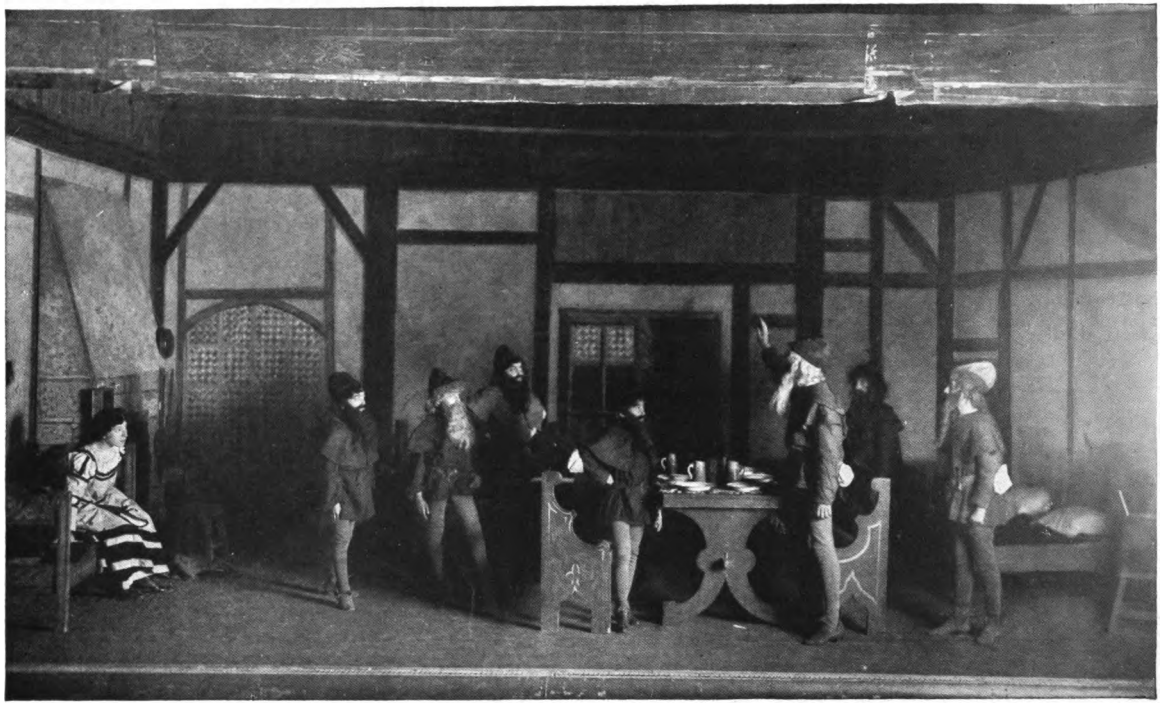
Standing still.

Digitized by Google

We were unable to use a tenth of the number who applied for dwarfs' parts, even though the boys did much preparatory work with the vague hope of getting one performance. I recall one stifling summer night taking the names of several dozen applicants who had been shut out of the rehearsal-room, which was overcrowded. Many of them had worked out original "stage business" by going over the typed parts of their companions, and they advanced a variety of pleas for parts, citing especially the end of the second act, when the little men succeed in persuading Snowwhite to accept their protection and remain with them while they volunteer to amuse her in various ways. Blick says, "I can turn a handspring" (he does it). Shick says, "I can crow like a cock" (he does it). Nick says, "I can turn a double somerset" (he does it), and so on.

As I watched the lads turn handsprings and somersets and heard them imitate a crowing cock I sympathized with the professional manager when I could only say, "I will take your name and address and let you hear from me." The wicked queen, the sweet maiden Snowwhite, the gallant prince, and the chancellor were less easy to cast, but frequent and thorough rehearsal brought the play to production in November. Its success was so great that in addition to the regular matinées we were obliged to give a number of evening performances, in order that sisters, cousins, and aunts might be present as well as parents of the players.

Digitized by Google



"SNOWWHITE." (*Produced 1905.*)
BLICK: "*Brothers, a word with you.*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

No improbabilities of plot seemed to trouble the auditors during the somewhat intricate action of this play, in which the real was admirably idealized. A great sigh of satisfaction would resound through the audience when it was seen that Snowwhite was not really dead, but was awakened to life and happiness by the Prince's kiss. When the wicked queen, tempting Snowwhite to eat the poisoned apple, threw it through the window of the dwarf's hut a dozen anxious voices cried out in admonition not to eat of it. Once the plaintive voice of a father was heard above the rest, "Don't eat it, Becky, it's poison!"

While I did not hesitate to present a dramatic version of Grim's fairy tale to our developed audiences, I confess to some trepidation when selecting "Little Lord Fauntleroy." I would not have offered the ideal relation between mother and son which this play illustrates to the lads nurtured on yellow-covered hair-raisers and fed on the somewhat strong, though often satisfying, diet of Bowery melodrama, had I not been certain that the play possessed a true heart interest of value to all classes.

The title part I knew would be difficult to cast and rehearse, for I feared that the youthful hero might be considered mawkishly sentimental and somewhat priggish, but during the progress of rehearsal the boy and the three girls cast for the young earl developed such simple, appealing traits of sincerity and charm, the many girls cast for "Dearest" played with such clear, motherly vision, that the large audiences were

Digitized by Google

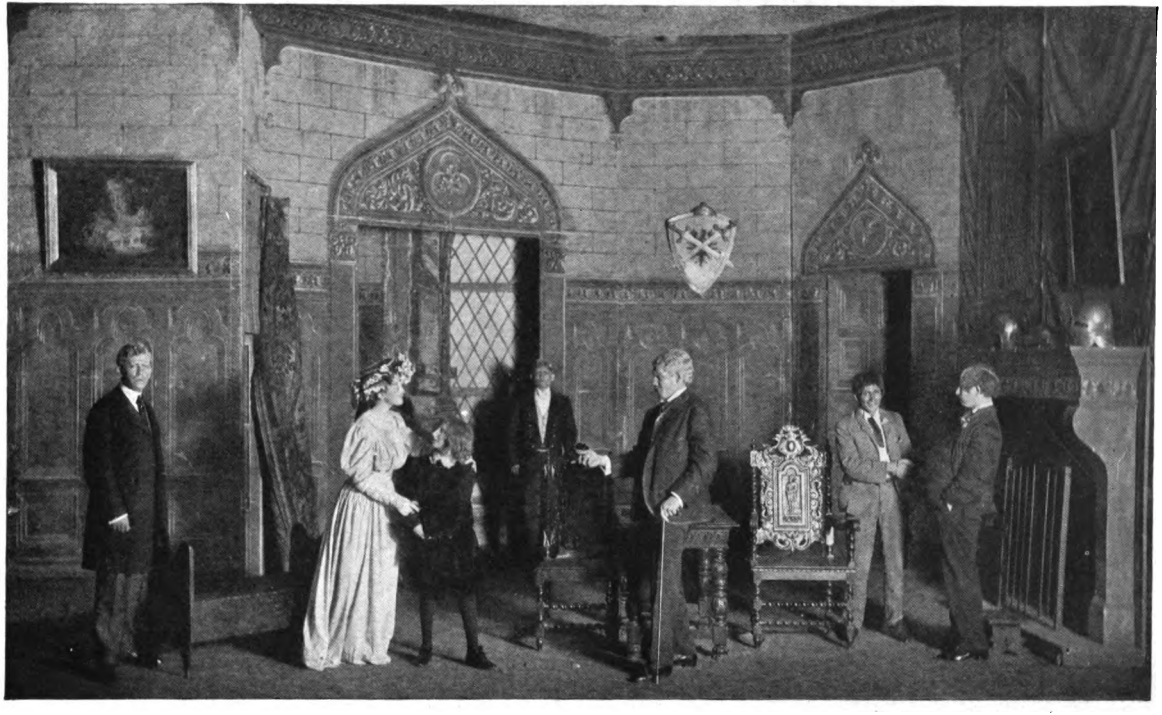
often at great pain to stifle their sobs of sympathy and their expressions of delight.

The roughest, most obstreperous boys sat absorbed in breathless interest through the tender scenes between mother and son, and we received constant applications from probation court officers for tickets for this play. They told us that a boy would report steadily for six weeks encouraged by the promise of a seat for "Fauntleroy." The boys heartily approved of Cedric Errol because he was just as kind and considerate to Mr. Hobbs, the grocer, and to Dick, the bootblack, as to his grandfather, the Earl of Dorincourt. The scene between the boy and Higgens, the English servant at Dorincourt Castle, in which the boy exercises his new authority to permit his future tenant to remain on the estate rent-free, always elicited a mighty round of applause. The children liked to remember that Cedric learned his good manners in the middle-class New York apartment, and was not by way of forgetting or changing them in the grand English castle.

My aim to make every aspect of the Children's Theatre a useful object lesson to both audience and player was constantly strengthened by several incidents which occurred during "Fauntleroy's" two-season run. For example, I cite one:

Mrs. Errol's slender income was about equal to that of many neighborhood families, so that her small living-room, the scene of the first act, was very inexpensively furnished. She was, nevertheless, a woman of taste and discrimination, and her room was delight-

Digitized by Google



"LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY." (*Produced 1905.*)

CEDRIC ERROL: "*To live with us always and always! Dearest! Dearest!*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

fully attractive, done in a restful green color scheme. The sewing-machine had a tasteful, though practical, cover, the rug was extremely cheap, but desirable, the few chairs used were solidly comfortable, the book-rack made by one of the property-boys matched the rest of the woodwork, while the green glass shade of the drop-lamp protected tired eyes.

When visiting the home near by the Alliance of a young stenographer who was ill I went into the parlor. My friend's mother greeted me, and, after introducing herself, asked whether the room seemed at all familiar to me. Being questioned, it seemed not ill-mannered to confess that it was very similar to our Fauntleroy set. My friend's mother was delighted, and said, "I'm glad it's right. I saw the play four times, and I tried to get it the same as Mrs. Errol. It wears better than my last set of plush parlor furniture, and it ain't so hard to keep clean. I'm proud you see it. We like it very much."

This is but one of many results so numerous that they would fill many books, but concerning which I frequently hesitate to speak because they have such intimate connection with people's lives. Constantly it came to our notice that the little of truth the play told was leaven for all life and that the story enacted on our stage found lasting response in the audience who carried it into the tall tenements and kindled the entire home circle into warm sympathy with the verities of the play. The box-office counted meagre returns, but educationally we coined the very gold of young hearts into eternal profit.

Digitized by Google

VI

The educational value of melodrama illustrated by our production of "The Prince and the Pauper."

WHILE it is beginning to be generally understood that the utility of all education should be determined by its efficiency in shaping character, no training can be effectual along these lines unless it be timely and suitable to the stage of life along which the pupil is passing. What may be excellent moral stimulus to the man and woman of middle life proves weak and colorless for the pulsating demands of youth, when muscles and morals have a deeper interrelation than is usually conceded.

The person of mature years has largely forgotten his own adolescent experiences, and there is much food for thought in Robert Louis Stevenson's query as to how much the philosophy of age is due to failing powers. Although among teachers, librarians, and social workers many will disagree, long experience has shown me that the sharp contrast between vice and virtue which the good old-time melodrama presents is excellent dramatic diet for the healthy, active digestion of youth. The best melodrama is a most constructive educational agency, since it encourages both player

Digitized by Google

and auditor to purify the emotions through their healthy exercise.

The first melodrama we attempted, "The Prince and the Pauper," presents many desirable qualities of contrast and is a play of stirring action. A decade past I had quivered with admiration at the courage of the youthful hero of this play when enjoying the dramatized version of Mark Twain's book made by my friend and teacher, Abby Sage Richardson.

The use of this version was given me by the loyal friend of the Children's Theatre, Mr. Daniel Frohman. The dramatic crux of the play being the strong resemblance between the young Prince of England and the pauper son of Tom Canty, for purposes of professional starring the title parts had originally been played by one child, while our purposes required two children.

To meet this need I obtained permission from Messrs. Clemens and Frohman to alter the original manuscript, which was done with the aid of the book. The newly made manuscript was read to the class, augmented for this reading by a vast number of boys and girls ranging in age from twelve to fifteen, applicants for the parts of the Prince and Pauper. After the first reading the news that strong resemblance between the two children was a necessary qualification for the title parts percolated through the neighborhood, and for weeks my office was besieged with children appearing in pairs. Desire developed great ingenuity. Girls donned similar dresses, sashes,

Digitized by Google

and hair coiffures; lads purchased insoles for shoes in order to "size up" to equal height, while numerous sets of twins triumphantly sprang, full-armed from the head of Melpomene, into dramatic birth. Sadly I announced that the dozen typed parts had all been preempted at the class readings. Not a whit daunted, the numerous resembling duos evolved the plan of visiting the office for a few hours each day during vacation months, and of copying parts from the manuscript, and this they did, studiously, and often executively, throughout the entire summer of 1907. The unfortunate limitation of a single matinée a week, coupled with lack of developed teachers, never permitted these numerous groups even one performance, although we used their interest and endeavor in other ways.

For the initial production of "The Prince and the Pauper" one hundred and thirty, including cast, scene-shifters, property-men, electricians, musicians, dressing-room and make-up helpers, were at work. Each matinée presenting some change in personnel of cast, at least three hundred persons were concerned during the run of the play. These hundreds of young people in the language, costume, and historic environment of Merrie England away back in the middle of the sixteenth century preached many a lesson of love, valor, courage, and good cheer to many thousands of people, young and old. Of course nobody among players or audience ever suspected any moral preachment. The people came to see because their ten cents

Digitized by Google

bought them entrance to the best show in the neighborhood. The people played because they wanted vicarious experience in the life of the Prince or the Pauper or young Queen Bess or Lord Seymour even more than they wanted to study or to eat or to go to dances. Rehearsals for this play needed most careful and intelligent use of our developed methods, for we were not anxious about the quality of the dramatic output of action in this rousing melodrama, but about the strength and quality of the impulse leading to action.

That the Bowery lad might enjoy true spiritual growth through his intimate contact with the brave young Prince, we strove to reinforce weakened points of personality, with the result that our player unconsciously came into a power of analysis, a judgment of his own qualities and experience in the safe restrictions of the assumed character by aid of which he sensed the dangers of violence or weakness that were part of his own personality.

Had dramatic instinct been used in this play to lash personality into exhibition at performances our months of preparation would have worked havoc among players, and we would, moreover, have given stupid, mechanical, ranting performances. As it was, the various characters became such intelligent, vital, interesting human beings that many of our auditors were certain we were dealing only with young people of unusual dramatic talent. It was necessary for them to see several performances, each employing different

Digitized by Google

casts, to realize that we dealt only with newly awakened perceptions and a very patiently developed sense of responsiveness to environment.

That this environment should be absolutely correct, I had new scenery built and properties made for this production, after which my meagre treasury was almost exhausted. Many beautiful materials for the costumes were donated by interested friends, but when we came to designing and cutting for the large cast we ran short of silk and velvet. I frequently succeeded in matching samples in Hester, Rivington, and Grand Street shops, and in many cases when I explained to what use the materials were to be put they were given to me. There was often this greeting, for example, when the owner of the shop called his wife from the room at back, explaining: "It's the lady that makes the plays where our Morris takes off for Shick in 'Snowwhite.' It's going to get a new play, and she wants velvet. Let's give it." I never hesitated to accept, because the gift was a recognition of value received by and through the children, and I was glad to permit the parents to repay in whatever way they could.

Having unusually large casts to train in "The Prince and the Pauper" we divided them up for rehearsal work into small groups, working in separate class-rooms, after which preliminary training all casts were brought together in the auditorium and the one furthest advanced took first stage-rehearsal work. The others were then called to every stage rehearsal, which they

Digitized by Google

"THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER," ACT I. (*Produced 1907.*)
PRINCE EDWARD: "*No Pauper, he is my guest.*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

watched, taking careful notes, and the place of any player who was dilatory and holding other players back was immediately taken by any one of half a dozen in the auditorium who were ready. This may seem a strenuous, to some, even, a cruel, method, but it is the way in life. If we are not ready there are always half a dozen others to take our places, so it behooves us to get ready! The Educational Theatre helped its players to be ready when opportunity offered, and with us it was often the tortoise who took the place of the hare, because once the aperceptive powers had made tenable the points of contact between the imaginary stage character and the real character in life the newly created personage played with an authority which successfully opposed all tactics of superficial preparation. The fleet-footed hare might wriggle through the benevolent cracks of an examination paper in literature, but there was scant hope for him on our stage, because he was obliged to *be* the character, to live it, to care about it enough to invoke all his latent resources in its preparation for portrayal to a large and exigent audience. His overwhelming desire to play the part was never gratified until he had accomplished his own work of evolution in creating it. This method gave us several differing interpretations of the same character, and proved to be of value in educating a truly discriminative taste in our audiences as well as a strengthened sense of responsibility among our players. Although using large numbers in scenes where crowds were required, we had no

Digitized by Google

dummy characters. For example, in the stable scene of "The Prince and the Pauper" each one of the forty in the mob was given a name and a few appropriate lines, which, though heard only as part of a general murmur, sustained the player's interest in the scene. The vivacity, movement, and extreme naturalness of this scene was frequently commented upon, and one of our best theatrical managers who saw the play declared he would give much to be able to hire a mob who would play with equal enthusiasm and vigor. Every part in this play required long, patient preparatory work, for the costumes were difficult to wear with dignity and the properties not easy to handle. The coronation scene in the last act was a veritable pageant in which every character was trained to the last degree of verisimilitude. Many round-shouldered, narrow-chested youths studied the part of the King's herald, and, despite their having had gymnasium instruction, we found them unfit for presentation to an audience. These young men coming to dress rehearsal and facing a prospective audience of a thousand people each one of whom had paid to hear them cry out at the fitting moment, "The King is dead, long live the King—long live King Henry the Eighth of England!" were obliged to invoke the spirit within them and to summon at their need the inexhaustible power which is given to every man. They dared not be held down and hampered by their own personality; they were the King's heralds for this moment, and must meet the obligations assumed.

Digitized by Google

Gradually the voice fostered by the thought became strong and vibrant, the chest broadened to meet the demand of physical expression, the head was uplifted to give dignity to the requirements of the character assumed, and for that moment the stooping, slovenly boy was transformed; he had done the thing he proposed doing; he grew to believe in his power because he had conformed to the idea in his mind. The revolution had attended the influx of the spirit which had but stood in need of expression. This method of cultivating dramatic instinct proved to be indeed a teaching of the spirit whereby ideals of life and conduct were lastingly inculcated.

Digitized by Google

VII

The use of dramatic instinct to develop resourcefulness, good taste, and discrimination. Some concrete examples of the same.

A FEW concrete examples of the practical application of our young people's developed dramatic instinct to the ordinary affairs of life will be helpful and interesting to those who desire to work along this affording line of least resistance.

Despite Emerson's assurance that "the sense of being well dressed gives an inward satisfaction which even religion is powerless to bestow," many critics of the Educational Theatre suggested that the wearing of finely wrought garments might lead the mind of the player into unsettling channels of desire. Our six years' experience showed clearly that if, to the audience, clothes were an "outward and visible sign" only, to the player the lesson sank deeper and was of lasting effect, influencing mind, imagination, and ideals. In obedience to the law of suggestion set in operation by dramatic instinct, sunken shoulders were lifted, slouching gait corrected, drooping head uplifted. While the garments of the queen were put on and off with the play, the grace and dignity acquired through the wearing of this suitable raiment became part of the

Digitized by Google

player's personal equipment. The dainty care required for the satins of the court lady reacted in the care of our players' own belongings. The very rags worn by our "vagabonds" became justly significant as rags and dirt perhaps had not been before. One charm of "The Prince and the Pauper" is that both Prince and Pauper are essentially unchanged by the transfer of garments. The nobility of the Prince but shines the more glorious in the rags of his misfortune. The royal robes that mystify the people of the play to the player present only a fit garbing of Tom's royalty of heart.

However, these valuable lessons were not learned by simply providing the suitable costumes and ordering the players to wear them; indeed, an understanding of the reasons for their suitability was always a vital part of the preparatory work for every play. After class reading of the play and evolution of the character values the matter of costume was discussed.

In the production of "The Little Princess" when thirty children were to be fitted out to attend Sara Crewe's birthday party I brought to rehearsal a dainty but inexpensive little gown of white India lawn, well cut and carefully made, but finished simply with a deep hemstitch suitable for easy laundering. This dress I tried on one of the children whom it fitted, and the children all agreed that this style of costume with the addition of pretty hair-ribbons was suitable for the party given in the parlor of Miss Minchin's school. When the time of dress rehearsal approached many

Digitized by Google

members of the group brought suggestions from mothers that children be allowed to wear their own best clothes, which, profusely trimmed with lace, must be grander for a party. The children were persuaded to ask their mothers to wait and see the simple dresses with their pretty blue and pink and white hair-bows and sashes. The result was extraordinary, for the girls looked so charming at performance that before the end of the season the many hundred children who had interchangeably played the parts had asked the privilege of borrowing the costumes in order that parents might have their little girls' photographs taken in these gowns. The results being in all cases satisfactory, the fashion of simple "best dresses" for little girls came into vogue, while the much over-trimmed, cheap-lace party and confirmation dress grew to be regarded as unfashionable, and, therefore, to be avoided.

In the play of "Little Lord Fauntleroy" we began by clothing Dick, the bootblack. We understood him to be an excellent bootblack, always having plenty of work. Some of the class members think that he must necessarily be dirty because of his work, but finally they realize that only his outer jumper need be dirty. He may be quite clean aside from that. Mr. Hobbs, the grocery man, the people believe, should have an ordinary ready-made business suit and a nice clean shirt, because he holds good trade, such as that of Mrs. Errol, Cedric's mother. The suggestion came that Mr. Hobbs might be very clean because he could

Digitized by Google

have all the soap he required from his own grocery store for nothing. Consensus of thought clothed little Cedric Errol in a denim sailor suit in the first act, when he is living on his mother's slender income, but when he becomes the adopted heir of the Earl of Dorincourt, living in the English castle, the people believed it suitable and appropriate that the lad should wear a black velvet coat and breeches and a proper riding costume on the occasion of riding through his English estates. By universal consent the people suggested as suitable for the lovely character of Dearest, the lad's mother, a simple but modest black cloth tailor-made gown and small hat for the first act when she goes out to attend to a matter of business, while there was no hesitancy in gowning Minna, the adventuress of the play, in a brilliant scarlet chiffon-cloth creation, a huge picture-hat with spreading plumes, a string of imitation pearls for her neck, and giving her to carry for business in the play an imitation gold vanity-box with mirror and powder puff. It was an assured fact that for our players the symbol of dress in our plays connected the territory of the imagination with the land of formal fact. A number of nice girls who had played Minna formerly had fallen into the error of wearing plumed picture-hats and transparent waists to business. One does not like to tell a nice girl that she cannot secure the respect of good business men while unsuitably dressed for her work. The social worker who, with the best intention, intrudes personal advice because those he de-

Digitized by Google

sires to help chance to reside on lower East Broadway instead of on upper Fifth Avenue merely displays poor taste and is inapt to alter a mistaken point of view in a matter so vital to all young girls as clothes. The use of dramatic instinct to stir the girl's imagination to the realization that the quiet garments of Mrs. Errol clothe the body of a woman whose qualities of mind and soul the girl desires to emulate, while Minna's gaudy apparel clothes the body of a woman whom the girl has grown to understand but not to admire, proved with us to be a very legitimate use of the primitive impulse to truly educational ends.

More than a hundred of our girls ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-five desired to play the part of Mrs. Errol; more than a dozen girls played the part, while a number played both Mrs. Errol and Minna, since it seemed urgent that a girl whose soul expanded naturally toward Mrs. Errol, the woman of ample spiritual life, should have her sympathies broadened through this practical training of the imagination to include the life of a woman like Minna. A number of our girls after playing the character ventured the suggestion that "It might not have been Minna's fault after all; maybe she did not have the same chance as Mrs. Errol."

Time and again when helping the young women to dress for the plays and listening to their comments among themselves regarding characters in the acted story I felt that in permitting our girls these vicarious experiences we were doing for them something which

Digitized by Google

might save them much pain, sorrow, and regret in life. It was certainly one approach to the problem, what shall we do with our girls, our precious young girls, whom we all would save from such life experiences as result in pessimism and cynicism, which is never promotive of virtue, for what man or woman ever gained anything through bitterness? It seemed most advisable to encourage a girl to live out the experience of an adventuress on our stage, although we should be averse to having the girl undergo the same experience in life. This interesting and innocuous field of initiation into life should never be closed to any adolescent when the precious flood-gates of feeling and emotion are wide ajar, for at this period the educators' opportunity is largest and most affording. How many young girls who desire to play the character of Shakespeare's heroine in "Romeo and Juliet" are ignorantly laughed at for being "stage-struck" when, as a matter of fact, the germ of human sympathy is at the root of the girl's desire! She feels an enkindling warmth stir her when she reads certain phrases spoken by this finely developed, passionately courageous human being. If properly directed in her desire, she may, through the full study of this character for performance on the boards of an Educational Theatre, reflect in her own life the desirable qualities which the great painter of human nature has stamped upon his canvas for all time. The most beautiful impulses of womanhood exist in Juliet, and many a young girl's ideals might be embodied in this character and her

Digitized by Google

vicarious experience might prove a very pillar of strength if the qualities leading to her impulse toward the playing of this character were properly developed, for the girl would be obliged to realize for herself and through her own work that moral elevation always implies moral choice.

Another point equally mooted with that of the "stage-struck" maiden was the desire for information as to how we managed costumes when various persons played the same part, and I am obliged to confess to frequent astonishment when a play required modern costumes, to see girls of sylph-like slimness and others of generously rotund proportions appear equally well dressed in Minna's scarlet chiffon gown or in the pale-lavender crépon worn by Dearest. The girls themselves suggested all manner of ingenious methods of shortening and lengthening, drawing in and letting out, and this interchange of garments often created resourceful generosity. For example, the part of Cedric Errol was played by so many children of totally different sizes that two sets of costumes became imperative. One Sunday afternoon a girl of twelve who was unusually large for her age was scheduled for her first performance of the title rôle. When the costume-box containing the set of larger Fauntleroy costumes was opened in the dressing-room the denim trousers for the sailor suit worn in the first act were missing. Diligent search failing to bring them to light, I told the child to arrange her hair and to don all of the costume except the trousers, assuring her we

Digitized by Google

would continue our search for them until the first curtain-call, when, if they could not be found, the second, a tiny girl, would be called upon to play. At the same time the larger girl was promised new trousers and a positive performance the following week. The little second-cast member dressed while the first struggled valiantly to proceed with her preparations, involuntary tears coursing down her cheeks as between sobs she gulped out, "My mamma and papa and aunties are all in front, and they all came to see me play Fauntleroy." Miserable and contrite, I proceeded on my way toward a last ineffectual hunt, when suddenly a small boy who was carrying a property for the first act stepped in my path and said: "I've got on a new pair of blue-and-white pants just like the ones you're looking for. I'm just Sarah's size. May I lend her my pants, so that she can play?" The idea was so quick and clever, the offer made with such hopeful expectancy, that I said at once, "That's a fine idea, Sammy; hurry up." The lad quickly secured a substitute for his work, and disappeared to the gentlemen's dressing-room, where he quietly awaited the ringing down of the curtain on the first act, when he resumed his trousers and his job as property-man, and it is needless to say Sarah's parents and her aunties were not disappointed, for her gladdened heart caused her to play with genuine appeal.

I have always felt that Sir Walter Raleigh throwing his cloak across a muddy road to assure his Queen a clean crossing performed no greater act of chivalry

Digitized by Google

than did our little property-boy when he assured to Sarah her ardently desired performance.

We experienced less trouble in regard to this interchange of costume when the play depicted a period of romance when the study of periodic costume and coiffure from plates and books of recognized authority became a valuable part of our work. Costumes were made of a middling stock size, and then ensued simple trust in the ascendancy of a prevailing lucky star that neither Gullivers nor Tom Thumbs might qualify for parts. However, if a Gulliver did qualify he got his chance to play, and one evening on the occasion of a performance of "The Prince and the Pauper" a young man much larger than any one who had as yet played the part was scheduled to play Lord Seymour. Try as he might, there was no hope of the big fellow getting into the middle-sized jerkin and puffed trousers. The tights alone were serviceable, but obviously insufficient. Almost in despair, the thought came to me to utilize an especially large costume which had been made for the Prince in the production of "Snowwhite," which play had been costumed in the period of Louis XIV. The Prince's costume being produced, the young man started dressing, but before Seymour had donned the coat of the Prince of Goldland, three lads playing in the stable scene who were helping him dress ran out to the wings, and, protesting to me quite sharply, said: "We can't let Seymour go on in that costume; it isn't the period, and all the people in the audience will know it. We've got to do something else. Suppose we get

Digitized by Google

Hertford to change clothes with Seymour, because Hertford's cloak is long and has no sleeves, so it will go on any one."

This proved to be exactly the correct solution, and these lads' developed perceptions saved a historic period as well as the feelings of a discriminative audience.

Digitized by Google

VIII

A valuable social and a necessary musical secondary or by-product of the Children's Theatre.

TWO educational by-products of high industrial and social value developed in the process of growth of the Children's Theatre—namely, the orchestra class and the monthly parents' meetings. A short account of these two branches of the work is requisite, because, while limited time, money, and talent may prevent the development of orchestra classes in connection with similar educational movements, the interest of the parents of those who act in the plays should always be enlisted, and their approval and co-operation sought, and without such approval no child or young man or woman who is a minor should be entered in the classes of any educational theatre.

In our work, from its inception, we did not depend upon a written expression of the parents' sanction of the child's playing. We called a meeting of both parents of every child and young person cast in every play, and explained to them the exact nature of the work. We always gave a brief résumé of the play, and told them just how frequently their children would be required for rehearsal. Dates, place, and

Digitized by Google

time of rehearsals were always printed on postal cards which were mailed to the homes of the players. In cases where parents could not understand what I said to them in English the stage-director repeated my words in their own tongue, so that no parent or guardian of a child ever left our meetings without full comprehension of what was being done. We were always careful to explain that this work was not intended to prepare young people for the professional stage. This explanation frequently elicited sighs of disappointment from parents, who said: "I'm so sorry. My girl is so talented, and I thought you could make her an actress. We can't afford to pay for her to learn, and I thought I would send her here." Despite the entrance of many such girls and boys into our work, we were never startled by any unusual talent among our players, while many lasting and precious friendships with parents showed me that, through the work of the Children's Theatre, they had grown to realize that the exuberant temperaments of their children demanded an outlet other than that provided by a stage career.

No matter how busy we were with rehearsal and performance, we never missed the purely social side of the movement which the parents' meeting represented after the work was in full swing. Regularly each month a date was set for these meetings at which the entire entertainment, as well as the refreshments, were supplied by the members of the speech and action and orchestra classes. Many excellent programmes of

Digitized by Google

readings, recitations, and musical numbers studied in class were given. At these affairs I never helped in any way other than looking over the programme and providing the room and piano. By request many of these entertainments arranged by our players were repeated in public schools, at asylums for the blind, and in various philanthropic institutions.

It was noticeably encouraging to have both fathers and mothers attend these meetings, which were always held either on Saturday or Sunday evenings, and, without seeking on our part, parents liked to bear testimony to the reactive influence of the work upon their children. Some parents who in the beginning had deplored the necessity of curtailing private piano and elocution lessons for their children in order to meet rehearsal and performance dates bore testimony to their satisfaction in the results of the substituted work. Parents frequently sent letters descriptive of the keen interest awakened in the entire family circle through the Children's Theatre, and they declared their contentment in knowing exactly where their young sons and daughters were passing their evenings, for they saw the result of their absence from home when they attended the play in which their children performed.

The parents of our young men and women players, by reason of their close relation, fully realized a valuable outcome of our methods, which was infrequently recognized by the casual observer—namely, the added acumen and riper judgment acquired by those who

Digitized by Google

PARENTS' MEETING

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

enacted numerous rôles. This humanistic school of character-playing proved to be unique preparation for a commercial career, and the experience on our stage of meeting people of all classes, afforded dignity and poise to the youth of the awkward age.

It came about that broadened sympathy induced by the understanding of characters in the plays proved a valuable business asset for our young people. To put themselves in the other man's place meant being able to deal with men and women in positions quite different from their own. It meant a more intelligent plea to the employer when seeking a situation; more tact and judgment in dealing with customers; a widened horizon to include the other man's point of view.

The business of getting on the play for presentation to the audience became a matter of responsibility which brooked no lack of system, no waste of effort, no neglect of opportunity. Through their interest in this work of playing our young people were gaining initiative, power, and control, the three great factors necessary to success in life.

The use of dramatic instinct as a release from self-consciousness through characterization served at this character-forming period to unchain the fetters of personality and free the spirit for contact with all humanity. Without any thought of pedagogical theory, we had, in the desire to realize our obligation to the audience in presenting all plays at a high standard of illusion, brought our young people under

Digitized by Google

a discipline of responsibility through which they had developed habits of promptness, resourcefulness, managerial efficiency, and general improved business acumen. One example of the many I could cite illustrative of this phase will be ample for my readers:

During the last year the work was in operation a young man who had played several parts in our plays and who was obliged to leave the class because his family had moved to New Jersey called upon me socially. In answer to my query as to how the family progressed in their new home he replied: "We are getting on very well indeed; we have started up a cleaning and pressing establishment on the main street, and while father attends to the work I make the business go from the front—I speak to the customers, take the orders, get new customers, and so on, because father doesn't speak English."

There was a breezy originality about the phrase "I make the business go from the front," but when we pause to consider, this is precisely what the salesman, or even the manager of a business, is obliged to do, and whatever training helps him in its accomplishment must be of practical value.

During my first year of service at the Educational Alliance, at the request of Mrs. Howard Mansfield, I wrote for the magazine then called *Charities and the Commons* under the title "The East Side Child and Music."

Before making such thorough investigation as the composition of this article required I had known that

Digitized by Google

genuine musical talent was to be found in many of the foreign and native born children of the Russians, Poles, Hungarians, and Italians. What I had not known before investigating was the fact that much of this talent was being perverted and put to base uses by ignorant, unscrupulous music-teachers, who always demanded a quarter's fee in advance, and who assured trusting parents that their children would secure engagements on the operatic or concert stage in two years, never more.

The Alliance was at that time expending one thousand dollars for ten concerts given in its hall by professional musicians under the leadership of Mr. Sam Franko. For the following season I secured the consent of the directors to expend the same amount to pay Mr. Franko to teach an orchestra class of young people who would not be obliged to pay any fee for their lessons, but who would be obliged to give their services regularly for *entr'acte* and incidental music for our plays. In addition, four Sunday-night concerts were given each season on our stage by this orchestra class.

This, like all our classes, was co-educational, and its work was of a high order. Here we dealt with talent carefully and patiently directed, and the ensemble work of our orchestra, which numbered thirty-six, was commented upon favorably by many celebrated musicians. We were always at a grave physical disadvantage with music for the plays, as the only place possible for the orchestra members to sit was a cage-

Digitized by Google

like affair perched high above one side of the stage, and only a recognition by the parents and pupils of the extreme value of Mr. Franko's tuition secured an orchestra which responded to the demands made upon it during six years. The personnel of the orchestra changed as its members secured progressional engagements, which was the case with one-third of the class after its first two seasons. A junior orchestra class developed, led by a member of the senior class, and its members augmented the seniors at the beginning of each season.

Tickets for the orchestra class concerts were always greatly in demand, although the concerts were not advertised in any way. Two weeks prior to each concert a printed programme was placed on a sign outside the building, and no concert was ever given by this class except on our stage.

Digitized by Google

ORCHESTRA CLASS

MR. SAM FRANKO, CONDUCTOR

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

IX

The stimulation of dramatic instinct toward purposeful play used as a preventive of crime.

THAT we produced a high-class dramatic entertainment by our method of training a primitive instinct to the player's lasting benefit and placing him in the correct costume and environment of the new creation, could not be doubted when an exceptionally sophisticated audience pronounced our production of "The Prince and the Pauper" well worth the regular theatre price plus a journey to lower East Broadway.

Since those living in the neighborhood of the Educational Alliance packed our auditorium at each performance, the exceptional audience might never have reached us except for the deep interest of our valued and well-loved friend, Mr. Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain), who, before our production of his play, was not acquainted with any of us.

When "The Prince and the Pauper" neared production members of the second, third, and fourth casts who attended rehearsals found the play so interesting that they suggested an invitation be sent to Mr. Clemens, asking him to come and see what had been done to make his story live. An invitation was sent, to which Mr. Clemens responded at once, saying

Digitized by Google

he would come, and asking the privilege of purchasing tickets for several friends, in whose company he attended the first matinée performance.

His deep interest was immediate and unbounded, and, moreover, his broad, sympathetic mind quickly grasped the fact that the play had grown to be only the final expression of the deep, underlying educational principle which its production adequately enunciated.

After seeing his play he responded enthusiastically to a request of the players to give a special evening performance for his friends, in the hope that some wealthy person or persons might be interested to suitably subsidize this unique and practical method of providing the best means of entertainment for young men, women, and children.

In the hope of playing at this invitation performance, vast numbers of people worked steadily during the summer of 1908, and the performance was given on the evening of November 19th of that year.

I confess to great temptation to show a picked cast on that occasion, but mature second thought reasoned that such a proceeding, after five years, would lose the confidence of the people, and the cast ready to play on November 19th played in regular succession; the players lived their parts with the usual lack of self-consciousness, and the attention of the large audience was held tense and concentrated throughout the play's four acts.

A feature of this performance was the raising of the

Digitized by Google

curtain for one change of set. Judge Hughes, then Governor, who was present that evening, was greatly interested in this part of the work. Having noted the reason for the raise of curtain on his programme, he asked, "Is it true that the boys who are shifting scenery to-night play leading or minor rôles at other performances?" I naturally replied affirmatively, and at the same time earnestly wished that he might have been present the following Sunday matinée to see the Pauper playing one of the shouts in the wings and the Prince acting as call-boy, while Princess Elizabeth held the prompt-book and Lord Seymour carried a banner in the crowd.

This interchange of duties and the necessity of equal intelligence and respect for obligation in the performance of a minor as in that of a major rôle proved to be fine moral stimulus. The unified effort not to the end of personal triumph or glorification but for the production as a whole and all for presentation to others, the coming together to *give* something rather than to *get* something, made for genuine altruism. It was a practical training which not only suggested ideals of civic duty, but helped the player to put such ideals into practice.

To respect the rights of others in whatever capacity the others served, to work for self-improvement and breadth of vision with a view to offering interesting results to an audience, to understand the other man's point of view because of having served in the same capacity and regarded life from the same standpoint

Digitized by Google

as he, was to realize in performance, not in theory, the true responsibilities of citizenship. It was a concrete and easily understood exposition of the truth that

> "Honor and fame from no conditions rise,
> Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

In "The Prince and the Pauper" more than in any other drama we had produced I noticed that young people could rid themselves of an impulse toward wrongdoing through the opportunity of acting out the impulse on a real stage and in the correct costume and environment of the character.

We constantly noticed that the youth whose craving dramatic instinct might easily have been capable of planning and accomplishing criminal acts was the very one whose same instinct made him equally capable of heroism, and in nine cases out of ten all he really desired was the opportunity to act out an impulse.

Give the boy of fifteen his chance to play a thief or a murderer on a stage in the costume and environment of the part, he will usually experience all he wants of stealing and killing. It may be highly dramatic to be one of the street gang, and it sets you up in the eyes of the other fellows, but it is just as picturesque if you can do it on the stage, and, besides, you have a better audience. Here is where the Educational Theatre gets its hold upon the youth whom no ordinary method of education has been able to reach, because no formal method is so powerful and so sure, because

Digitized by Google

so attractive, so stimulating, so interesting to the youth himself.

What good to preach of the beauty of truth and valor and courage to a youth whose drunken father shies dinner-plates at his head? Such a boy might stray into a church or Sunday-school to get out of the cold, but he really *wants* to be Prince Edward when he comes to the Educational Theatre. He has paid his dime to come into the theatre dozens of times during the past five years, and he has seen another boy play the part. He wants the chance to get into those beautiful white satin clothes, with the golden belt and the dangling sword and the feather in the cap. He knows that in this theatre he has the right to play, and other fellows and girls will pay to see him, just as he has put up his dime to see Jake and Jim. He counsels himself he could hardly believe that that fellow on the stage was really Jake. He looked so different and he seemed so different when he was shooting craps on the corner last winter. The boy cannot fathom the mystery of the transformation, for he has only heard Jakie say that he has been having the time of his life playing at Prince Edward in "The Prince and the Pauper." The lad's desire to enact Prince Edward is so strong that it brings him to class-room and rehearsal work for three whole months, and when he finally does qualify in the part he gives us quite a different young Prince from the one Jakie gave, and his impersonation is especially interesting for that reason. We see how it grows to be far better

Digitized by Google

fun for him to hurl make-believe golden coins into the midst of an admiring multitude of sixteenth-century gamins, all of whom, by the way, are his own intimate companions, than to shoot craps with the very same fellows on East Broadway.

We counted the months of careful, patient training well spent when it served to bring the soul of our boy of an East Side tenement into points of contact with the soul and spirit of the chivalrous young Prince, and from these points of contact to stimulate him into action. The task was lightened for the trainer because the boy had elected to do his own work, as every one must in the Educational Theatre, not for an instant because of any desire to know the history, the customs, or the manners of Elizabethan England or to develop his own sense of kinship with gentleness and honor, but merely because he wanted to play the part of Edward. He wanted to show his father and mother and all his friends *his* idea of Edward, he wanted to *be* the young Prince, and he loved his self-appointed task well enough to be willing to work in preparation until his Prince Edward was true, not only to his own ideal, but true also to the real young Prince. Our player had been willing to pursue the ideal to the length of carrying it to objective issue. He had stuck to the hard, laborious part of his work until he had evolved a creation sufficiently life-like to warrant its portrayal to a vast audience who were willing to pay to see it, and still our player had not the slightest spark of dramatic talent and no elocution

Digitized by Google

teacher would ever have chosen him even to "speak a piece."

What has the playing of the character of Edward done for this boy besides affording him some months of genuine happiness? It has recovered and strengthened his own will power through the stimulus of Edward's will; the boy had lost and so found himself in the joy and sorrow of the young English Prince. The proper direction and control of his dramatic impulse had brought him into such intimate association with young Edward, Prince of Wales, that the thrill of Edward's valor will forever afterward be unconsciously a part of himself, for something struggling in his starved soul has demanded and received expression. In the last act of the drama, when the young Prince, in the rags of Tom Canty, the Pauper, makes sturdy claim to his righteous throne it was good to see this youth of the streets raise his hand with natural dignity, and, when Lord Seymour, with selfish motive, would oppose him, cry out, "Hold, Lord Seymour, and stand not in the way when God brings right!"

Through the imagery of another soul our boy had secured a new spiritual asset. That great lesson once learned, we did not permit him to continue playing the character of Edward until repetition served to make performance mechanical. We encouraged him to widen his circle of friends, to broaden his sympathies, to steady and control his emotions by their exercise in establishing points of contact with other lives. It is improbable that our youthful player will ever be on

Digitized by Google

intimate terms with an English earl, but if it ever happens that he does meet an English gentleman his stage connection with the life of Cedric Errol will make him speedily recognize the difference between an English gentleman and a bounder, or, for that matter, between an American gentleman and a snob.

The youth himself, in company with his friends and intimates, was not at all troubled with the notion that he had histrionic talent. He was perfectly sure that any of the fellows he knew could do the same thing in this theatre if they wanted to give the time to it. Sophisticated audiences who, unlike him, did not recognize the difference between dramatic instinct and dramatic talent, declared, when seeing him perform, that he was a wonder. Commenting upon the value of the work, they constantly said to me, "It is no use, you cannot deny it, that boy is gifted." In truth, they were a trifle disconcerted when, visiting the theatre the following week, they saw the same character equally well enacted by Jakie; but never mind, they were right, Jakie was also gifted, and in their conclusions I entirely acquiesced, for in both instances they were correct. Tommy and Jakie, in common with all the world, are gifted with dramatic instinct.

Every Tommy and Jakie and Mamie and Maggie, as well as every Alphonso and Eustace and every Marjorie and Madeleine, money-rich and money-poor alike, every child born into our Lord's good world is gifted and endowed with the great heritage of imagi-

Digitized by Google

nation, the warp and woof of which is woven of dramatic instinct. It is among the basic forces whereby God shapes humanity, and through it is indeed caught a reflection of God in man. It is the force which makes the soldier on the battle-field grasp his country's flag, and, raising it high above his head, cry out, "On to victory!" even though that victory includes the death of his own body. It sustains the monk in his vigils, the statesman in his patriotism, the preacher in his pulpit. Through proper cultivation it may be made a force in education so far-reaching that under its organized impulse the entire character may be developed, mind quickened, sympathies broadened, ambitions ennobled, and bodies lifted and remade.

Digitized by Google

X

The developed audience a necessary foundation of the endowed theatre.

THE announcement of a new play at the Children's Theatre grew to be a social event in the neighborhood, and when a new play was announced my office was besieged with applicants for tickets, since our limited funds permitted the opening of the box-office only on the day of the performance, but we continued to distribute exchangeable cards in the different public schools in order to vary the audiences.

The size of the audience was the capacity of the hall, and only as many exchangeable tickets were issued as the hall would accommodate, but the shut-out audience was always far larger than the one to which our limited space allowed admittance.

Sunday matinées began at 2.30 P.M., and as early as 11 A.M. the long line began to form outside the building, and wound, snake-like, around three blocks. Each week I and several assistants walked along the extended lines trying to persuade parents and children to return to their homes, explaining the impossibility of our admitting one-third of the number who had collected. They always said they were willing to take their chance of possible admittance, protesting

Digitized by Google

THE SHUT-OUT AUDIENCE

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

frequently a trip from Brooklyn or the Bronx, and often they were contentedly munching sandwiches and fruit, quite prepared to camp out and storm the impenetrable fortress. A thriving business in soft drinks, lolly pops, and bananas was inaugurated by enterprising venders all along the line of attack, and while I always regarded the sale of supplies created by this demand as entirely legitimate, I strove hard to prevent the sale of the exchangeable cards distributed in the schools. We found that people often paid twenty-five and fifty cents for one of these cards, whose possessors were stationed near the head of the line. However, the ticket speculator, like Banquo's ghost at the feast, would not down, because I could never think of a better method of varying our audiences than that of the card distribution in the public schools.

For the first two years the price of a seat at the theatre was five cents, the decision to charge this sum being arrived at after deliberate consideration and discussion with a little friend who was in exactly the position to know just what the poorer children could afford. She said, "A child can easy save a penny on Monday and one on Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday mostly from chewing-gum and candy, so by Sunday any girl and boy can have five cents." When, however, the waiting line lengthened interminably and each Sunday represented the triumph of hope over experience, the notion of diminishing the crowd grimly pressed toward a raise in admission price. Again the little girl was consulted.

Digitized by Google

She looked grave at the suggestion of ten-cent seats, and her reply came slowly, "Well, ten cents is just twice as much as five cents." A realization of all that answer implied was borne in upon me and the inauguration of the ten-cent régime was carefully watched. The occasion was a matinée of "Little Lord Fauntleroy," a play which had been running the entire previous season. The waiting crowd was as large as ever, drawn from precisely the same class of young people. That day I asked several boys in the audience whether their parents were willing for them to pay ten cents. They answered, "Sure! Yer have ter pay fifteen cents fer a standee over ter Miner's, and here ye git a seat fer ten and a better show." The latter part of the reply was of far more interest than the former, for, although we offered a cheaper seat than the Bowery managers, did we provide a better show according to the street-urchin's standard? Evidently we did, because we continued to crowd the auditorium week after week, and could have done so had space, time, and money permitted a daily matinée.

Not one child ever suspected our educational intent. The children came for amusement, and they got it. What they acquired by the way sank deep into heart and mind; its quality we controlled and its reactive effect was lasting, wholesome, upbuilding, for we supplied an embodiment of the child's imagination, and our triumph was that his ten cents bought our entrance into his heart and life, while he spent it for a "show" which he counted a good bargain.

Digitized by Google

Our audience were under no control whatever, except such as was self-imposed, for attention was doorkeeper to the mind. Interest in what was going to happen kept the audience from actively interfering with the play. When thunderous applause of the heroine or manifest disapproval of the villain became too prolonged an emphatic hush-sh-sh vibrated through the auditorium, and the children brought themselves to quiet and decorum because they wanted to hear. The removal of hats was effected in the same way. It is true we printed a request in our programme similar to that in other theatre programmes asking that hats be removed, but this was never half so effective as a dig in the ribs bestowed by the boy behind upon the one in front accompanied by the admonition, "Say, take off yer cap. I can't see."

When *entr'acte* music was first inaugurated Mr. Sam Franko, the musical director, felt that he should be allowed to demand quiet between the acts, so that the carefully prepared selections might be heard. To this repression, however, I never consented, because I felt that when the audience desired to hear the music they would themselves demand quiet and would listen. Often the orchestra class patiently played through a hum and sometimes a clamor of inattention. Frequently it happened that the audience remained in perfect silence during the playing of even classical selections, and it very often demanded the repetition of a favorite.

The crowd that filled the auditorium was not our

Digitized by Google

entire audience. During a performance of "Snow-white" a little girl was "drawn out" in vain; the child's passionate attention to the play never swerved. At the end of the performance she was asked to name the most interesting event on the stage. She replied: "All; but this is the first time I saw 'Snowwhite,' and I have to listen much, 'cause my parents will want me to act it for them like I acted for them 'The Little Princess' and 'Little Lord Fauntleroy.' I take off for them every part in the play."

Our audiences literally lived in the play, whose every scene was punctuated by involuntary exclamations of the auditors. Thus, in "The Prince and the Pauper" when Mad Anthony has tied the little Prince to a beam in the stable-loft, planning to kill him, and the hero, Miles Hendon, enters with the query, "Where is the boy?" a dozen voices in the auditorium shouted, "There he is, mister, up there." At this stage of the play every boy and girl in front has grown to love the valiant little Prince and is consumed with desire to see him returned to his own. When at the coronation scene Tom Canty returns the regal garments and resumes his scanty rags that the righteous Prince may be crowned King of England a rousing thunder of applause approved the act; and when the new-made King rewards Miles Hendon, not a heart was unstirred at this swift tribute of gratitude to loyalty.

At the termination of the first performance of "The Prince and the Pauper" Mr. William Dean Howells, who accompanied Mr. Clemens to see the play, was

Digitized by Google

AN AUDIENCE AT THE PLAY "SNOWWHITE"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

asked how he had enjoyed it. He replied, "The play behind the footlights was admirably well done, yet I believe I enjoyed the play in front quite as well." Indeed, a visit to the Children's Theatre on a Sunday afternoon was a liberal education in the reality which the acted story presented to the child's mind and the stimulus of this reality upon his sympathies and imagination.

We believed not only in the value to the child of the three hours in our auditorium because he was for that time at least in contact of heart and mind with his ideals, but in the reactive influence of these three hours upon his life and ambition. During my last year of service at the Educational Alliance I made an exhaustive investigation of moving-picture theatres in Greater New York, inviting many of those who frequented the Children's Theatre to accompany me to the moving-picture shows. I could see that these youngsters were not posing for effect when they told me that they had grown to care but little for this popular form of amusement. The interspersed songs and vaudeville acts seemed to them tiresome and meaningless because they had become accustomed to the continuity of time, place, and action of the drama, and, moreover, to its intelligent and sincere interpretation. They were unwilling to accept canned drama as substitute for the fresh, unadulterated article, and, for me, this attitude of our developed audience solved the great problem which has caused so much controversy and claimed the attention of so

Digitized by Google

many earnest persons; the elevation of our theatre.

It is impossible for the child nurtured on moving-picture shows and cheap vaudeville to develop into the man or woman who can enjoy well-interpreted productions of classic or modern drama. No educator would expect that a child who had been given only dime novels and sensational yellow journals as literary pabulum could, upon such food, develop a digestion for the great poetical and prose writers; why, then, should we expect that the child fed on moving-picture shows and vaudeville should suddenly blossom out into the man and woman desiring a clean and elevating drama? How can we expect the boy who has been encouraged to seek in his hours of leisure only excitement for the senses, to develop into any but the man who is deadly bored and wearied by a play which requires analysis or exercise of judgment, or the girl to seek diversion in anything more elevating than the good looks of the matinée idol and his capacity for love-making? Let it be understood that I am by no means limiting my argument to the children of the money poor, since all children are open to the tremendous influence of the acted story, and especially open to this influence at the formative period. The commercial manager cannot organize children's theatres because the right kind of a children's theatre never can and never *should* be a paying proposition, but the theatres which produce clean, interesting and even literary plays for adults will be

Digitized by Google

profitable and successful if the public can be made to realize that a taste for good drama is inculcated during youth, the flexible, romantic period when all the faculties are receptive and when moral and esthetic influences meet ready response.

Laertes to Ophelia most wisely says: "For in the morn and liquid dew of youth contagious blastments are most imminent."

The wise man who would build the endowed drama on a rock should turn his attention and his resources to Children's Educational Theatres, and the rain of moving-picture theatres may descend, and the floods of vaudeville come, and the winds of perverted problem plays blow and beat upon these houses, but they will not fall, for they will be founded upon a rock.

Digitized by Google

XI

The Sunday closing and the incorporation of The Educational Theatre for Children and Young People. A brief summary of what it accomplished.

IN the heyday of this constructive social work through which thousands of our future citizens were absorbing ideals of life and conduct, besides being supplied with wholesome, uplifting recreation, somebody discovered that Chapter 13, Section 570, of the City Ordinances was not being properly enforced.

This unenforced law which troubled the consciences of our municipal rulers is practically identical with the law of 1860, Chapter 501, and was made when New York was largely a homogeneous city. It is now a miscellaneous city, and the law as it stands is no longer practical nor advisable. As results show, it permits a loophole for the operation of totally sensual entertainment on the Christian Sunday through which those who would organize ideal spiritual recreation for that day, when the masses can be reached, are unwilling to crawl.

Of course the Children's Theatre was operating in ignorant disregard of that law, so were the New York Symphony Concerts, so was any and every form of spiritual and uplifting recreation which our city

Digitized by Google

afforded at that time. Since the Children's Theatre was supported by the Educational Alliance, a law-abiding institution, we were closed, and my request to the directors to permit me to plead for special legislation for the opening of the Children's Theatre was refused, the directors feeling that their board, composed exclusively of Hebrews, should not, in a Christian city, request special legislation for any movement which concerned the Christian Sunday.

I agreed that a more effectual plea could have been entered by a group professing mixed creeds, still it was a matter of deep regret to me when this Americanizing institution which stood as an intermediary between the foreigner and the Jew shrank from asking the assistance of the State for the further prosecution of this citizen-making branch of its work, because I felt that there was no reason to fear adverse criticism any more than Mr. Walter Damrosch had reason to fear such in making his gallant plea for the reopening of the Symphony Concerts he directed.

The children were never able to understand why their theatre, their greatest source of interest and recreation, had been closed, and for weeks after the closing hundreds of parents and children made unavailing written and personal protests. Three boys who had played dwarfs in "Snowwhite" and pages in "As You Like It" prepared a comprehensive and touching appeal for the reopening of their theatre. This they carried to various evening recreation centres in the public schools, and the appeal was signed by

Digitized by Google

many thousands of the theatre's regular attendants, after which they carried it to the alderman of the district, to the alderman whom they had heard favored the observance of a wiser interpretation of the Sunday law; to a canon of the Episcopal Church, and to others whom they thought would help. This was all done during the Christmas holiday week, when I was away from New York, and was presented to me only on my return. Since the lads had been using their developed judgment along the lines strengthened by their purposeful play, and since the thing they proposed was in line with the principles of our democracy, I could not admonish them for their course of action, although, at the dictum of those who were financially supporting the work, I was obliged to request them to drop further action in the matter.

Since Sunday was the only afternoon on which we could secure the Alliance auditorium, and it was also the only afternoon when young men and women wage-earners could play, I put into class study and rehearsal a number of one-act plays suitable for a mature audience. From January until June, 1908, at a regular series of Saturday-evening performances, we produced the following one and two act plays: "'Op O' Me Thumb," "The Forest Flower," "The End of the Way," "A Comédie Royal," "Editha's Burglar," "In Far Bohemia" and "Miss Civilization."

With the exception of "Editha's Burglar," none of these plays employed children, and all those taking part in them, except the character of Editha, were

Digitized by Google

adults. Our method, essentially developing the creative, not the imitative faculty, permitted children to play only parts whose meaning could be grasped and understood by them so thoroughly that action would be natural, not mechanical.

Despite worthy performances of the one-act plays, they never "drew" as the matinées had done. The auditorium was usually about three-quarters filled and no waiting line. The truth is that these plays, while excellent material for study and performance, were not especially suited to the taste of our audiences, as our box-office demonstrated.

In June, 1908, at the end of the Educational Alliance's fiscal year, the work was incorporated as a separate organization under the somewhat ponderous name of "The Educational Theatre for Children and Young People." We hesitated before handicapping the work with so awkward a name, but I feared calling it "The Children's Theatre" because so many persons were even then under the misapprehension that all of our players were children; on the other hand, I feared that to entitle it "The Educational Theatre" would be pretentious, and would, moreover, keep young people from attending. We sought the advice of Mr. Daniel Frohman, to whom we put the question, "May not the word 'educational' defeat its ends in keeping young folks away from the box-office?" After careful thought he replied: "I think the 'Educational Theatre' an excellent name. It at once differentiates your work from that of the

Digitized by Google

commercial theatre, and if your plays are interesting you cannot keep people away no matter what you call it. If, however, your plays happen at times not to be interesting, as is the case with us all, people will say, 'Well, this is only educational; it is not supposed to be interesting.'"

So as "The Educational Theatre for Children and Young People" we were incorporated. The new board of directors comprised Mr. Samuel L. Clemens, the Rev. Percy Stickney Grant, Mr. Robert J. Collier, Mr. Otto H. Kahn, and myself, all believing in the aims and ideals of the work, and all trusting that the necessary financial support would be forthcoming to establish children's theatres on a sound basis.

From July 1st until August 1st, 1908, we held classes in the home of Mr. Collier, at 19 Gramercy Park. The classes, under the direction of Mr. Heniger, were led by volunteer teachers who had developed from among class members.

In the hope of producing Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" during the ensuing season, this classic was studied during the summer by young men and women who had followed us from East Broadway, their number augmented by several living in the vicinity of Gramercy Park. "The Little Princess," with entirely new groups of children, many of whom came to us from neighboring schools, was prepared during the summer. On October 1st a small house at 217 East Eighteenth Street was leased, and there we placed our offices and classes; but we had no stage

Digitized by Google

upon which to rehearse. The directors of the Alliance permitted us to use their stage at such infrequent times as it was not required for other work, and the stage of the Lyceum Theatre was given for a few rehearsals. Every time we needed stage rehearsals groups of thirty or more had to be taken from Eighteenth Street either to lower East Broadway or to West Forty-fifth Street, and this involved great waste of time.

However, we were ready early in December with our production of "The Little Princess," which we played a dozen times during the season with various casts. One cast performed at a theatre then called The New German Theatre, at Fifty-eighth Street and Madison Avenue, for the benefit of the Normal College Alumnæ Settlement. This performance was given at a matinée during the Christmas holiday week, and it netted to the settlement about two thousand dollars. At another time the play was given by an entirely different group at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on a Saturday afternoon, and netted something over two thousand dollars for the Brooklyn Free Kindergarten Association. Other performances with different groups were given for the benefit of various institutions at Carnegie Hall Lyceum, the Berkeley Lyceum, the Hotel Plaza, and at the Woman's Club, in Orange, New Jersey. No rehearsals were ever held on these different stages where the players arrived just in time to dress and go on. The different audiences affected the young performers in no way; they

Digitized by Google

seemed to be entirely unconscious of them. No one objected to paying the regular theatre prices at these entertainments, feeling that they received the worth of their money, and about six thousand dollars was turned into the treasury of various philanthropies through the playing of our young people this one season.

My action in making money for others when our own treasury was so nearly empty was criticised, but in doing this I but held to two principles of gravest importance to me. First, my unqualified refusal to exploit the personality of the players who gave these demonstration performances as a part of the curriculum of our work. No names of persons ever appeared on any of the programmes of the Educational Theatre, which bore only the names of characters in the plays. Second, my determination that this work should not develop into a money-making business, since this would have been fatal to the very life of the movement, and would, moreover, have been a precedent for unscrupulous persons to pervert youths' dramatic instinct for selfish personal ends. These demonstration performances were given not only that their financial results might accrue to worthy philanthropies, but in the hope that our own work might be better understood, and also that it might serve as an example to any desiring to further the movement. In the latter hope we responded to the request of the Woman's Education Association of Boston to give a demonstration of our work in that city under their

Digitized by Google

auspices and at their expense of transportation. I was desirous of giving "Twelfth Night" on this occasion, as class work looking toward production of the play had been completed, but we had no stage on which to rehearse, nor had we money with which to secure scenery and costumes. Again the members of the association requested "The Little Princess" because it employed a large number of children, and so "The Little Princess" was given.

We desired to give the Boston performance in one of the large new public schools, in any one of which the platforms might have been extended to the size necessary for the stage, but all available scenery was too high for any school stage, so the association hired Jordan Hall, and scenery for the play was loaned by Mr. John Craig.

We fixed upon Washington's Birthday as a suitable date, because it fell that year on Monday, and one group of players, scene-shifters, property-men, dressing-room and make-up helpers, together with our orchestra, were taken to Boston on Sunday, February 21, 1909. We were eighty in all.

I had not supposed that the judgment of a Solomon and the wisdom of a Solon would be necessary for the selection of the cast for the Boston performance, as I counted upon a kind of natural selection from among the many casts, for I thought many parents would be averse to having the children take the trip without them. Therefore, I called a meeting of the parents of all children who had played in various casts during

Digitized by Google

that season and explained to them the object of the performance, the auspices under which it would be given, the provisions for transportation in a private car, and housing of the players in a Boston hotel. I explained every detail carefully, and requested that no parent allow a child's natural persuasion through his desire to be one of the holiday party to unduly influence a right decision.

Every parent except two were not only willing, but desirous, for their sons and daughters to be of the party. The two exceptions were a little lad of twelve who played one of the many Donalds, and whose mother explained that he suffered from nightmare, and she feared he might disturb the others. The second exception was in the case of a girl of fourteen, who could not be spared from housework for the family. Her disappointment was keen when she told me that Sara Crewe's party on our stage was the only party she had ever attended.

Natural selection failing, we were forced to the drawing of lots for two-thirds of the party children; the remaining third was made up of those who had at various times played leading parts. I remember the look of astonishment on the face of a lady who was staying at the hotel in Boston where we stayed when the girl destined to play Sara Crewe had an attack of nausea from the car motion. She said, "Wouldn't it be terrible if she couldn't play?" I reassured her by my reply that, while we should regret the cause of her inability, it would not affect the performance,

Digitized by Google

because there were six other Saras in the company who could play equally well. For the mature characters we selected such young men and women as experience proved would be useful in the care and management of the children, because we had our orchestra children to look after as well as our players. The young people enjoyed seeing what little of the Hub we could show them in the limited time at our disposal, and the performance, beginning at 2 P.M., went without a hitch of any kind. The audience, who had paid the regular theatre price for seats, was, I understood, a representative one of men and women interested in educational and social work. The orchestra, as well as the players, received much favorable comment. All concerned in the performance reached their New York homes in ample time for school and business on Tuesday, February 23d, and the Boston experience still marks a red-letter day in the lives of the young people who enjoyed it.

Digitized by Google

XII

The Dramatic Instinct of the Young Child, and Its Satisfaction—The Activity of the Dramatic Instinct During Adolescence

THE work of the Educational Theatre demonstrated the new and successful application of a principle long known in education, although this work was not inaugurated with any idea of evolving or of proving any educational principle.

As the work grew I kept a few of the best American educators in touch with it, and they assured me that we were evolving theory in the most sane and rational way—by practice. While my training enabled me to outline and supervise the work of play-giving, I realized that an exposition of the educational principles upon which our play-giving was founded would come with far greater authority from experts in the educational world than from me. Accordingly I outlined a series of six lectures on The Activity of the Dramatic Instinct during pre-adolescence and adolescence, on The Development of the Humanities through Character-playing, and on The Drama in its relation to education. Doctors Percival Chubb, G. Stanley Hall, Franklin B. Sargent, Professor George Pierce Baker, Mr. Percy MacKaye, and Doctor James J. Walsh delivered these lectures, giving their services gratis at

Digitized by Google

the Lyceum Theatre, New York City, during January, February, and March, 1909.

This book would be incomplete without the dictum of the educational doctrine of the work which they voiced. The following excerpts from these lectures will be of inestimable value to teachers who desire to properly develop dramatic instinct:

THE DRAMATIC INSTINCT OF THE YOUNG CHILD, AND ITS SATISFACTION

By Percival Chubb, Formerly Director of Festivals in the Ethical Culture School

Our recent pedagogy has not been insensible of the great losses suffered by the child through the change in our civilization from one of rural type to one of urban type; but it has had its eye chiefly on the so-called manual activities of the child—that side of the old life of the child on the farm or in the small semi-rural town, to which Professor Dewey and his disciples have drawn our attention. They have insisted upon the practical recognition of the principle of self-activity and the fundamental motor-nature of the child. The child learns by doing, by trying, and we must give back to him in new forms the old opportunity for instructive activity which he had by doing things about the home and the farm.

So far so good; but this is a small chapter of the story. A whole field of child life has been neglected—the field in which the child exercised that form of its motor-life which we call dramatic. This form of activity is not subordinate; it is primary, fundamental.

Digitized by Google

Let me go on to explain that this dramatic expression is complex. Its basis is the imitative, or mimetic instinct, which uses as its instruments sound, or vocalization, gesture—facial and corporal—and movement in the larger sense. All these marks of dramatic expression are found in the child. Its first language is a cry (as that inspired scoundrel, Rousseau, to whom modern pedagogy is so deeply indebted, put it). Gradually the cry becomes expressive—a sort of lyric language. Then the child develops, or, rather, it develops simultaneously, a sign-language of gesture. The random movements of the arms become purposeful outreachings. He learns to make himself understood by pointing and clutching and beckoning, etc. Then he learns arch ways of peek-a-booing. He playfully or tearfully turns from friend or stranger to nestle in the hollows of mother's breast or in the folds of her dress. And meanwhile speech is being developed—at first purely imitative or onomatopoetic speech. He illustrates one theory—the bow-wow theory of the origin of speech—by imitating the sounds of animals and birds and things, the "choo-choo," "tinkle-tinkle," and "pit-a-pat" of baby speech.

All these steps and the succeeding steps of the child's triumphant progress in expression are imprinted in the pages of that immortal and indispensable manual for parents and educators—*Mother Goose*.

I wish I had time to unfold the infinite riches, pedagogical and literary, of this classical collection of nursery songs, rhymes, jingles, dance ditties, games,

Digitized by Google

"A COMÉDIE ROYAL." (*Produced 1908.*)
SIR JOHN HARTWYND: "*Please, Your Grace, I plead that this my son did stand apart.*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

riddles, dramas, short stories, fables, sermons, and I know not what. As a means of understanding the literary and linguistic and dramatic nature of the child they are equally important, perhaps are more illuminating than, actual observation of living children.

Now these rhymes of *Mother Goose* were predominatingly dramatic. A great many of them associate words, song, and action. The ordinary printed collections are misleading in this respect. The words, taken alone, are not the thing. Think of printing "Pease porridge hot" as a separate and independent poem without the dramatic hand-play! Indeed, it is a pity to have these rhymes in books at all. They should be handed on, as they have been, through the centuries, by traditionary means.

It has been pointed out that we have in many nursery songs (common in great variety to many of the European nations) survivals of the old choral dance or dance-drama of antiquity. This fact may illustrate anew the idea of the parallelism of the child and the race, and re-enforce the contention that the child's earliest forms of expression are, like early man's, composite. Song, story, gesture, dance have none of them been detached as yet from a composite form of art in which each is only a co-operant factor. In the case of primitive man words are late in coming—and much later are detached from song—poetry, as is well known, antedating prose as a literary form. There is at first little pure song; the song inevitably bends toward the ballad, or song-dance, and the ballad toward the dance-drama.

Digitized by Google

Passing beyond the nursery, it is unnecessary to be exhaustive in recording the various forms which dramatization has taken with children of riper years. The streets offer perpetual evidence in the underlying game of keeping a school and running a store; in the doll-play of girls; in the gangs of boy "Injuns," boy pirates, and boy highwaymen, who are dramatic with that droll earnestness which Stevenson and Kenneth Grahame have glorified.

I return now to my statements that we have lost this inheritance of artistic play, of composite dramatic expressiveness; that we have failed to realize the seriousness of the loss, and that we are doing very little to make it good. Children do not begin aright. They have never known *Mother Goose*. They have no places in our large cities to give the plays of childhood. They are corrupted by the bought toys, which are deadly to inventiveness and dramatic resourcefulness. They are corrupted by the evil example of their elders in making festive play synonymous with mere noise. They are corrupted by the caterer. Fathers and mothers have not time or inclination to help out with family plays. Money is plentiful, and purchases pomp for the children, instead of allowing them to invent and provide for themselves. And, finally, the children are corrupted by the theatre and vaudeville shows designed only for adults. Children in my day went to the theatre once or twice a year; at Christmas to the Christmas pantomime of glorious memory, the only other form of entertainment being

Digitized by Google

quite occasional—the travelling circus, the minstrel shows, and the small shows at the fairs.

I hope I have said enough to support the contention that the child is naturally and normally dramatic, and that dramatic activity has been a prime factor in the child's life and education outside the school, where, indeed, most of his education has been obtained. To summarize: I have made a brief appeal (1) to the early stages of the child's development, in which gesture and mimicry and crude song precede speech (as it is generally supposed they did in the life of early man); (2) to the products or the transcripts of child-play in our legacy of nursery games and rhymes, and (3) to the varied form of dramatic interest and activity which have played an important part in the lives of children up to, and in some instances beyond, adolescence.

Fortunately there is a turn of the tide in the affairs of children. Pageants and festivals, folk-dancing and folk-drama are being revived here and abroad. This renaissance will be speeded if we do our duty in the schools, and by other means along the lines being staked out by Miss Herts in this enterprise of The Educational Theatre for Children and Young People.

And now, to consider what may be done to provide for the dramatic instinct in education, I shall speak from experience, and report upon our years of steady work and experimentation at the Ethical Culture School. The work focuses in our festivals, which are

Digitized by Google

given periodically and systematically in the course of the year. It is the festival which, as the folk-festivals of the past show, allows the most fully orchestrated union of the arts and the most harmonious combination of all the instruments of expression.

These school festivals are intended to direct the minds of children at the great seasonal and memorial dates of the calendar—spring and fall, with their parables of birth and death and renewal; the birthdays and deathdays of the great heroes and helpers of the race, collectively on All Souls' Day and Patriots' Day, and, individually on annual and centennial commemorations—to direct at such times the thoughts of the young upon the great ideas which have been central and recurrent themes in the thought of man during the ages.

Such festivals are pedagogically desirable as the most vital method of co-ordinating the activities and studies of the curriculum, utilizing the dramatic impulse as the agency of correlation. The central subject in such correlation is, of course, literature. History is closely associated with it, especially in those plays and pageants which are based upon historical incident, as, for instance, the commemoration of the Lewis and Clark expedition or the Louisiana Purchase or the lives of Franklin, Lincoln, and Hudson. But more closely related to literature than history, is music. Dancing comes next, and then follow art, domestic art, shop work, and printing. In planning and executing a festival the children of the elementary

Digitized by Google

and high schools are involved in much inventive and creative work in these subjects—the writing of plays, the making of songs and tunes and dances; decorations for the stage and the hall; designing of costumes after the requisite research work; the making of stage properties; the designing and printing of the programme. There would seem to be no reason why a children's theatre should not involve such correlated work in all these departments of activity, work which should constitute the theatre a place of many-sided education, and such a hive of co-operative industry as the school-room becomes when a class undertakes the working out of a festival or play.

The educational values obtained from this work are very various. First of all is the development of the co-operative spirit. The team-work of the class results, as it does in football and other games, in the subordination of the individual to the whole. There is a genuine desire to secure the best possible result by assigning the parts to those who are best fitted for them. This means very often the discovery of unsuspected aptitudes. Children who have shown no particular gifts in ordinary studies not infrequently exhibit unsuspected powers in the dramatic field.

In the next place, contrary to the usual belief, this work, instead of developing self-consciousness and a theatrical habit of posing, is a means of preserving the delightful unconsciousness and spontaneity of childhood. That is the testimony of teachers and visitors. The genuine delight of the children in their work coun-

Digitized by Google

teracts any tendency toward staginess. I would reenforce with every possible emphasis the distinction which Miss Herts has herself drawn between the dramatic instinct and dramatic talent, or, if one may use other terms, between the dramatic and the theatrical. There is no element of the theatrical in this school work. It is rather an antidote to and a corrective of the theatrical.

I have said that literature is the central subject in the festival work of the school, but must explain that it is literature understood in a somewhat different sense from that in which it is commonly understood in the schools. We have largely failed in our school treatment of literature to recognize that literature until quite recently was not associated in the minds of the masses of the people with books, but was a product of the tongue, appealing to the ear and the auditory imagination. We must realize that Homer was sung about the streets; that the dramas of the great Greek tragedians were things seen and heard; that the great stories and songs and ballads of the world were chanted or recited, danced or acted, long before they were written or printed. The characteristics of poetry—rhythm, rhyme alliteration, onomatopœia—are all for the tongue and the ear. Milton or Tennyson write down not words but sounds. The notation of print is to be immediately translated, as we translate the notation of notes in music, into vocal effects.

This view of literature becomes universally signifi-

Digitized by Google

cant when we consider particularly the literature of childhood. Until quite recently the only literature of childhood was the traditional literature of nursery rhyme, fairy story, legend, and singing-game transmitted from generation to generation through the memory. Literature for children written by adults is quite a new-fangled thing. We should remember this, and see to it that literature for the child (that is, up to the ninth or tenth year) should be for the most part oral literature. Songs should be sung, epics chanted, stories narrated with dramatic effect, and dramas acted. But we have converted these things into book studies and into products for the eye instead of the ear.

If literature were properly treated in our schools it would have much more of the social value which literature had before men retired to the chimney-corner to read silently and alone the magazine or the book, and were accustomed to enjoy together the lyric, epic, or dramatic products handed down from great masters or from that body of unknown creators who had gradually shaped the popular ballad or dance-drama which they sang and acted at their feasts and gatherings.

The most urgent of reasons why we should work in order that childhood may come by its rights in securing free play for its dramatic instinct is that we need a more child-like world for our children to live in. We are trying to bring them up in the midst of an adult civilization—and an unlovely enough one it too

Digitized by Google

often is. They work and play with adults. They are fed on adult talk (few American parents adjust their talk at meal-times to their children); they read adult newspapers and magazines; they go to adult theatres. The older childish and home-made forms of amusement are gone. We are all, old and young, in the hands of the caterer and the box-office. We must give the children a chance to create their own world of play—joyous, childish play.

Let me add in conclusion that I interpret this movement for which Miss Herts and the Children's Theatre stand as a part of the great movement that is developing among us to get more purposeful play into life for old as well as young. In the highly specialized labor of to-day a man can find no adequate expression of himself in his work—which may be the making, year in and year out, of the twentieth part of a shoe. We must save ourselves by a wiser attention to play, to amusement and recreation; and we must begin by giving our children the chance to grow by creative, formative play, involving the deeper forces of child nature and the joyous exercise of childhood's best gifts.

THE ACTIVITY OF THE DRAMATIC INSTINCT DURING ADOLESCENCE

By G. Stanley Hall
President of Clark University

Adolescence is, roughly speaking, the teens when nature and heredity add a higher story to humanity

Digitized by Google

and transform the boy and girl into the man and woman. Its early years are marked by an outburst of physical growth, by floods of new emotions and new interests in adult life in all its varieties. There is normally a rather sudden expansion of the soul almost to its limits, for at no stage of life does the individual come so near being a complete representation of the entire species. It is the nascent period of about all the higher powers of man. It is the humanistic age when culture should be most general and all-sided, because interests are so. If ever there is a glint of genius, even in the stupid, or of talent, even in the commonplace soul, it appears now. The doors of many possibilities are now ajar if not open, although many of them will ere long close. It is a most critical season, because more or less arrest is sooner or later inevitable; and the most fortunate of us have never yet realized all the possibilities opened to us at this stage. It is the golden age when man and woman awake in their paradise, when the intuitions are keenest, experience most vivid, memories most indelible, curiosity most eager, acquisition most rapid, and mental digestion most perfect. It is the birthday of temperament, and even of affectations galore. Everything is in the nebulous stage, and hence not only are plasticity, docility, and imitation extreme, but there is always the great, and, with every year, the growing danger of arrest of all degrees.

Before this age the child has developed keen sympathy with every form of animal life which it is

Digitized by Google

familiar with. It often does not need the stimulus of the kindergarten games to leap like the frog, bark and bite like the dog, be driven like the horse, to understand the pig as the symbol of filth and greed, the cow of patient, friendly helpfulness, the hen of motherly care, and all the rest. It is repeating that stage in the remote life of our forebears lived out very close to the animal world, and which was largely devoted to hunting and to domestication of animals. Birds and beasts are thus to the modern child who is repeating this antique Æsop stage each a single, simplified, and embodied human quality. The dove, hawk, weasel, bull, bear, and all the rest, are almost names for psychic or moral traits which, when they are combined in man, are too subtle and intricate to be clearly understood, but which, isolated and exaggerated in animals, constitute the child's first lesson in psychology. And as savages in their dances wear the skins of animals and act out the characteristic events in their lives, and often assume a single species as their heraldic totem, so little children love to act animal rôles, and often do so with great verisimilitude, occasionally sustaining a rôle so long that they have to be cured by being exposed to an impressive animal of a different species.

We are just beginning to understand the value of this instinct, not only for education in natural history, but for its moral effects upon the child. Only those with personal knowledge of the barnyard or acquaintance with animal life afield can have a correct appre-

Digitized by Google

ciation of the significance of such every-day characterizations of men and women as is so forcibly and rudely hit off in the phrases, She is a butterfly, peacock, cat, etc.; or, He is a pig, mule, ass, etc. This crass psychology is the oldest of all and takes us back to the age of chipped flint and of the cave-dwellers. The secret of the intense interest children have in animal life is that they see in it human traits isolated, standing out one by one, perhaps a little exaggerated, and, therefore, all the more pedagogic. Just as one cause of children's love of dolls is that a fully accoutred lady is too big and complex an object to be understood by them, while a fully dressed doll reduces her to the dimensions of the children's mind, so men and women are far too intricate to be known through all their social disguises, so the child reverts to first principles in animals, where greed, cruelty, love, pride, and all the basal instincts of man stand out. Animal rôles give young children excellent varieties of motor education and are often successfully prescribed to correct incipient motor and moral defects.

Now, one of the most characteristic changes of dawning adolescence is the awakening of interest in adult men and women and all their works and ways. Before this children's chief interest is in other children. But pubescent boys and girls begin to wonder, with greater or less anxiety, how it will fare with them in the great world of grown-ups. It all seems so intricate. So much, too, is hidden, and there are so many contradictions and uncertainties. It is just here that the

Digitized by Google

drama should do its most beneficent educational work. Its function is to simplify life and character, to present typical traits and situations, to reduce the dimensions of time by presenting the slow result of years in an hour, and to overcome space and distance and bring everything into the now and here, and thus, by its threefold unity of time, place, and action to help knit up the very neurones of the brain into a more complete unity by co-ordinating many items to one focus. In life youth could hardly discern clearly the miser, spendthrift, liar, hypocrite, egoist, prodigal, swindler, gambler, patriot, martyr, and all the rest. Each quality is disguised and mixed with others. But the drama presents a large repertory of such simplified, elemental human qualities, admirably adjusted to the educative or apprenticeship stage of life. The primitive traits of which human nature is made up can be observed and studied as a mechanic studies a machine, part by part, before it is put together. Thus a proper curriculum of theatre-going might, should, and doubtless will be, made a part of the initiation of youth to the highest study of mankind, which is man. Thus, as civilization advances and life grows more complex the drama is more and more needful as an epitome and fore-school to the art and science of living. It introduces to the great social and moral forces that dominate all races and nations and especially all individual destinies. Hence, we might almost say that human life to-day without the drama would be like chemistry without its table of elements, a library without a sub-

Digitized by Google

ject catalogue, a book without an index, or a great science without elementary text-books. On the stage we learn what man becomes when dominated by any one of the great basal passions—love, jealousy, fear, revenge, justice, and righteousness. The germs of every type of human nature, including the possibilities of every vice and crime, and happily of every virtue, are in every one of us, and hence it is in the drama more than in any other art that the soul sees itself reflected as in a mirror.

Again, in life the good are often defeated and evil triumphs. On the stage this never happens, for the villain always gets his deserts and virtue is rewarded. In life "the mills of God grind slowly" and just judgment, if it comes, is often delayed until we doubt if honesty is really the best policy. But, unlike Jehovah, Melpomene balances her book and pays at each day's end, and we go home after the last act with a deep sense that a power that makes for righteousness is on the throne of things. I am speaking of the stage as it ought to be, but as it is to-day only ideally.

Now, we can see the vital way the drama meets the needs of youth. In the teens the soul sprouts with buds of possibilities and of curiosities about human life. Little children are recapitulating a past stage of existence long since obsolete for adults. Now they have stepped out into the spacious domain of the king, man, and are ready for initiation into life, some form of which is found among every primitive race at this stage. All savages induct their pubescent boys

Digitized by Google

and maidens into the tribe by rites, legends, and explaining customs, laws, in the process, adults imparting all they deem needful. This is the stage when nearly all religions confirm, when most conversions occur, and when most children leave school forever, having satisfied the requirements of law. This great node of life thus marks the point at which education began and from which it slowly extended upward toward the university and downward toward the kindergarten.

Now the more we study childhood the more we see how this age is shot through and pervaded by the dramatic instinct. The boy in this awkward, callow, pin-feather stage begins to swagger, to affect mannish ways. How he loves to bully and show off! How terrible he wishes his mates to think he would be should he become completely mad with abandon! How he glows over the thrilling record of Bill the Bronco Buster, and how fond he is of fancying himself an Indian! How his first gun fairly inflames his imagination! What yarns of adventure a few boys at this age develop the power to spin, to the delectation of their gaping mates! How faithfully the city gang reproduces the life of the savage tribe! How facile at the age when he meditates his first shave is his imitation of the speech and ways of Yankee, dago, paddy, darky, and perhaps the ways of girls! A few pretend, bluff, spout, or mimic tragic expressions, covering their retreat by a sudden collapse to a drivelling pathos and banality.

Digitized by Google

And budding girls—how prone they are to try on a large repertory of characters, as some of them try many styles of handwriting until they get one that suits. They simper, mince, smirk a little, are immune to none of the prevailing fads and are prone to many affectations of speech. Occasionally there are dialogues with imaginary companions, and as they pound out their best piece on the piano they are sometimes lost, it may be in revery, of a vast audience crazy for encores, and so vivid is their imagination that some have actually acted out a return to the stage, bowing and gathering up the bouquets and marching off with armfuls of imaginary Jack and American Beauty roses. They day-dream of a prince, nobleman, or millionaire, who perhaps may even now be sailing over the sea to carry them off as brides to a splendid castle. Sometimes they imagine themselves dead, lying cold, pure, and white, in an elegant shroud and tasteful coffin, while tearful friends stand around praising their virtues and possibly smitten with regret that it was their unkindness that drove them to leap into the dark flood, for these revery suicides always go to heaven by water.

And how cleverly a few of these brilliant, if a little neurotic, buds can lie and deceive the very elect!

A girl in Watseka, the story of whom has been elaborately studied, heard much home talk of spiritism, and at length, when a girl near her own age, who had, *nota bene*, an attractive brother, died, she suddenly swooned, did not know her parents, demanded to be

Digitized by Google

taken home, affecting to have taken the dead girl's place and to have assumed her personality. The bereaved family, who believed that the spirits of our dear departed may thus return, were actually convinced that they had back the veritable spirit of their dead child in another's body. The little visitor cleverly withstood many a test and lived in clover, until at length the new life palled on and irked her, and so one day she swooned back to her old self and cried: "Where am I? Take me back to my parents!" and went back with her little breast doubtless full of a unique and strange peace that passeth understanding. Indeed, I have collected about a score of cases of this latter class, where buds have fooled and bewildered parents and even savants by causing what were thought to be spiritualistic phenomena.

Again, all the many statistical and qualitative studies of children's reading show that with the teens imagination takes flight in the world of books and literature. Some boys and more girls become passionate and voracious readers, leaving the child's possibly mean environment and living in the unreal world of fancy, impelled with a lust to glow and tingle with participation in the fuller life the soul now craves. The love of story now culminates, and the youth wants to become a citizen of all times and a spectator of all events, and to feel all aspects and characters in the world's great drama. Never is the imagination so active or all its creations so real. Never is the instinct to transcend the present and be absorbed and

Digitized by Google

moulded by the great personages and crucial events of fiction and history, or the power to lose the self in what is alien and strange, so great; so that there is often an inverse ratio between the real environment and the fancied one. Never again will the imagination, which is the totalizing faculty which rounds out the defects and limitations of our individuality, be so often of illusory intensity or be so often mistaken in vividness for sense and experience.

Thus we see that in this period of human life nature is more molten and plastic than it will ever be again. It has more possibilities of good and evil, is most curious, most imitative, most susceptible, most prone to try on every new temperament, to essay in a feeling way every and any rôle, like a vine that is in the circummutating stage, before it has clasped a support, up which it will climb. In the soul of youth manifold propensities are struggling for expression, and most of its activities are below the threshold of consciousness, and it is to these deeper instincts and to a life of intuition and feeling that the educational appeal must be made, and where moral and esthetic influences are most needed and most responded to.

But these are long chapters, at the content of which I can here only hint. All this new knowledge of the nature of youth shows how its very soul needs the drama, and what the instinct to act and to see acting can do in preventing the precious raw material of life from running to waste, in damming its spring freshets,

Digitized by Google

husbanding its waters, and canalizing them to irrigate a rich and wide acreage.

The Schiller theatre in Berlin has long given frequent performances at reduced rates of the plays of Schiller, as well as those of Goethe and Lessing, for school-children, who must be certified to have read these dramas in order to secure these reduced rates. This theatre is thus, in a sense, a part of the city school system. It is pedagogical inefficiency to have children read the dead plays of Shakespeare in school and never see them alive on the stage. The closer union between the theatre and the school, now attempted in so many ways and places, is excellent for both. Who shall say that, on the whole, more good than harm would not be done to the greatest number if a few of the best theatres in this city—*e.g.*, with their best plays —were open Sunday afternoon and evening for young people who are now exposed to so many worse influences without? In the past the drama has been a close and potent ally of the Church, and I believe a new bond between these two culture powers could be found, and that, if the right adjustment were made, both would be benefited. Youth must be served, which means the city youth must and *will* see spectacles and attend shows vastly more now that they are cheapened, and, if pure mental pabulum is not presented, adulterations come in. The play may be bad, and the melodramatic elements may be so lurid as to make school-life and studies seem pale and uninteresting, but young people must have excitement or

Digitized by Google

revert to savage life in gangs. Without excitement they grow stale and devitalized. But if wild life for boys and a gushing, romantic sentimentality for girls at this yeasty stage, as they see it in the theatre, sometimes infects with these tendencies, it also acts in the opposite direction as a vent or harmless discharge for pent-up feelings which might otherwise become dangerous, bringing real immunity as the mild varioloid caused by vaccination safeguards against smallpox. Many have held that to witness instances of extreme fear or pathos on the stage and sharing these feelings as spectators reduces our liability to give way to them and increases our power of controlling them.

Finally, as to acting by young people themselves, a remarkable wave is now setting in this direction in the secondary schools of this country and of the world, and, to some extent, in the Sunday-schools. It is a broad, general principle that wherever we can add expressive elements to reading or to conversation, such as inflection, facial expression, gesture, and dramatic action, we help to make our mental processes more vivid, and that this also makes for honesty itself, which is greatly furthered by heartiness, for it is harder to lie if our utterance is hearty and emphatic. For youth to act a part is often to live it, to enter into it with abandon. Sometimes the momentum of the first rôle persists for days and weeks and needs to be counteracted by a different one; and all who can act doubtless need for their balance a repertory of

Digitized by Google

rôles, the more varied the better for their own personal development.

Genetic psychologists and educationists thus look with peculiar interest upon the genial and creative natural departure inaugurated by Miss Herts in the Children's Theatre. They realize that it meets a real and great need of youth; commend its provisions, that for each rôle several players shall be trained, and that, as one precaution against gifted girls being stage-struck or spoiled, the names of performers do not appear upon the programme; understand that the many accessory activities—preparation of scenes, wardrobe, music, getting up of the programme, looking after tickets, literary study and physical training—make an *ensemble* of admirably co-ordinated, mutual help, with unity and order pervading all.

Much as has been accomplished, the best is yet to come, for the influence of this movement is irradiating widely, and new possibilities of correlation with home, school, personal, moral, and social betterment are rapidly increasing. At any rate, from my personal point of view, as an onlooker, I cannot close without expressing for the Children's Theatre my own hearty, ungrudging, and reiterated God-speed.

Digitized by Google

XIII

The Development of the Humanities in the Greek, the Elizabethan and the Poetic Drama

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE GREEK DRAMA

By Franklin Sargent
President American Academy of Dramatic Arts

LIKE a great crucible into which molten streams had poured and suddenly fused in a perfect union, the genius of the Greeks, fed from inflowing inheritances from the north, the south, and from the east, suddenly, in the fifth century before Christ, burst into a glow, and the drama appeared as the crystallized expression of the humanities—of the wisdom and beauty of human life.

Could we transport ourselves twenty-five hundred years to olden Greece, we would certainly go with the whole populace into the great open-air theatre and sit with our class, the outside barbarians, up in the back seats in front of the women and children, and watch the dignitaries and priests file in and join in the applause of their welcome. Twenty thousand people are there with emotions as many as the vivid colors

Digitized by Google

of their clothes—all viewing first the religious processional and ceremonial and then the play.

Look into the great circle or acting space, with its altars and statues and burning incense, its near backing of low wall of painted wood, and the far background buildings, and trees and mountains and cloudless sky far beyond. It is a state ceremony, and all are admitted, even the slaves.

The people know intimately the heroic legends that form the basis of the plays. Equally familiar are they with the merits or demerits of playwright and actors and most ready to express approval or disapproval. It is all a dramatic contest and the valued prize is a simple wreath.

On and on in accumulating power and passion, from climax to climax, the great drama grows and grows—a battle of man and destiny. The episodes or scenes are separated by the odes of the chorus, who in song and in dialogue, in symbolic movements, marches, and descriptive chant, comment upon the events of the drama, "a play within a play," translating to us the deeper meanings, warnings, hopes, praise, or blame, the morals of the life problems involved in the story.

To the audience of that time it is much more than is any play to us of to-day, for it is not only the union of the arts in perfect form—a series of great music-dramas lasting throughout each day of a week's festival—but, more than this, it is to one and all a source of information, an intellectual stimulus, their

Digitized by Google

sole reference-library of history and fiction and science—their newspaper, their political club, their principal social organization, and their church. The plays taught the universal bearing of each act and always presented suffering as punishment of sin. There is nothing accidental. Over all hung Fate like a great iron ceiling, ever ready to fall, and the rest was mystery—not to be worried over, but with an adaptable and cheerful sophistry.

We hear to-day not infrequently the thought expressed in Molière's phrase, "The Ancients for the Ancients." Many make up their minds to attend a reproduction of a Greek play as they would look over old curios in an antiquary shop. Even such auditors cannot fail to obtain and to carry away as a permanent impression the sense of great wisdom and power and beauty. Every line is pregnant with lasting meaning, every action is symbolic of far-seeing meaning.

Even more to the players themselves in this Aristotelian "purification."

If we could have more Greek plays adequately presented, whether in Greek or English, we would find an antidote for the sordidness, the sentimentalities, and transient sensationalisms, a cure for the theatrical weed-growth, like the great sky and mountains and expanse of nature to the pettifogging, down-gazing inhabitant of a dirty, sleepy city alley.

The Greek drama should be to the theatre world of spectators and actors what the Bible is to the world at large, and when intellectually and vitally our stand-

Digitized by Google

ards shall have lifted and our processes improved we will find that we are nearing the Greek ideals, as we are now in such movements as in the renaissance of Greek dancing and in the Educational Theatre, where the imagination of youth is lifted to high ideals.

The greatest law with the Greeks of Pericles's reign was that of harmony—the balance of human mind, body, and spirit. They obtained, therefore, a perfection of technique, of mental power, and of emotional range that has never been surpassed. We are tempted in writing of this golden age of the world's history to become rhapsodists, like the epic poets of the classic age.

What more titanic conception than that of Æschylus's Prometheus, bound by shackles of Fate to a great rock on the world mountain at earth's boundary for the gift he made to mankind of the fire of immortality? What more forceful exposition of the "age-long hopes and fears and passions of the human soul," in Professor Moulton's words, than Sophocles's Creon or Ajax or Œdipus or Antigone or Electra?

The student of Greek ordinarily takes his doses of classic drama in short measures, painfully swallowed and rarely digested. Drama in print, especially that of the Ancients, is too often studied as "the written word of thought which, taken by itself, is an inanimate thing," as Socrates put it.

The Greek drama is living and everlasting because it talks and acts, interpreting, not merely reflecting, life. To be understood in its completeness, all drama

Digitized by Google

should be acted. The Greek drama when read should be considered as philosophy upon life—profound, vivid, and oracular. Development of the altruistic, humanitarian impulses could be induced in youthful students through the playing of the great Greek dramas. Harmonious development of mind, soul, and body could thus be effected.

Under the spell of the mighty drama of Æschylus, of Sophocles, of Euripides, come forth larger instincts, more active imagination, a hunger for emotional existence as for a divine manna, a stirring of disused temperamental powers, an awakening of neglected faculties and functions—and in the acting of such plays a freer opening of the clogged values of instrumental skill.

The so-called dead language becomes a living thing, animated by human and present purpose and radiant with far-reaching meaning, a vivified interest throbbing as actual experience. We have left the shallows and have passed out into the deep, extending our horizon, searching new lands in a new and larger world of feeling and thought as students of life.

THE EDUCATIVE VALUE FOR CHILDREN IN ACTING SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

By George P. Baker
Professor of Dramatic Literature, Harvard University

Why should children act the plays of Shakespeare? One knows the reiterated objections: "The children can only be puppets repeating the intonations and

Digitized by Google

gestures of their teacher"; "They will be made hopelessly self-conscious and avid of ill-considered praise"; "All will feel the lure of the stage, and many will be unhappy if they cannot become professional actors." The first two objections hold only with the wrong method of training the children. They should never be made merely to express the ideas and the methods of the "coach"; they should be led to give, as far as possible, their own presentation of the play. Leave them to themselves and they will choose some natural leader among them as guide. Together they will, by reading and discussion, work out a performance which, whatever its artistic shortcomings, will be interesting as the expression of themselves, and for them educative in many ways. Or, as Miss Herts has done, help the children in their discussions to select among their ideas, train them to come as near as in them lies to what they wish to do with their parts, and aid them to combine their efforts so as to make an artistic whole, but keep your own personality out of the final performance. To draw out the children as thinkers, to help them to express their ideas of the emotions of others, this is educative coaching. Its steady exemplification in the Educational Theatre has proved it possible.

As to the third objection be it said that the glamor of the stage comes mainly from ignorance of it. The child who has gone through the rehearsals necessary for careful production of a Shakespearian play and knows what they demand in assiduity, patience, and

Digitized by Google

creative imagination is far less likely to dream of easy conquests in the theatre than is he who has had no such experience. The very small number among the children who have shared in the work of the Educational Theatre, who have shown any lasting desire to become professional actors, proves this last statement true.

Can any one who has watched these children of the Educational Theatre, or even any children, carefully rehearsing a standard play (whether Shakespeare's or not), have any doubt as to the value of the experience in improving pronunciation, enunciation, and general deportment? With right coaching, too, the spirit of co-operative work, of subordination of one's self to common ends is developed. So, too, are promptness and, better still, exactness. Those who have taught children know how ready a child usually is to offer "something just as good," but no play can be successfully produced in which the actors have not approximated as closely as they possibly can just the intonations, gestures, and groupings desired. The secret of all these advantages, the barrier to the disadvantages feared, lies, whether the play be Shakespeare's or another's, in a competent, intelligent coach. That such coaches can be found without serious difficulty school plays have demonstrated again and again.

"Very well, then," the conservative says; "but let the children give plays less exacting, more within their powers, than those of Shakespeare." On the con-

Digitized by Google

trary, Shakespeare's is the best possible drama for them to attempt—and for many reasons. Though Shakespeare had many cultivated men and women in his audiences, especially at court performances, he faced, day by day, at the Globe Theatre, a public curiously child-like. Education was spreading slowly through the masses. Books had not long been widely disseminated. The public had a child-like curiosity to learn of men and manners at home and abroad. They loved a story, as does a child, far more than characterization or anything else. Like a child, they did not readily distinguish fact from fiction, romance from realism. Witches, ghosts, alchemy, astrology had for them all the mystery and allurement they still have for children. They were without psychology. To them life presented itself as events preordained by a will too mighty and too mysterious to be understood in its workings or, especially on the stage of the day, as the sum total of striking and dramatic fortuitous events. Cause and effect in the conduct of life, particularly in its tragedies, Shakespeare revealed to his public. Moreover, like children, this audience came to the theatre in the afternoon freshly, not weary at the end of a long day. It came primarily for entertainment, but it was willing to be instructed and improved, if at the same time entertained. As Shakespeare's dramatic standards grew and his ambition, as a consequence, developed, he raised the child-like audience to a level of understanding and appreciation such that it cared as much for charac-

Digitized by Google

terization as plot, such that it became so deeply interested in cause and effect that modern tragedy was born. In other words, a people youthful in experience, as a nation, youthful in knowledge of itself, he refined and elevated, thus developing in them humanity. Under these circumstances, would it be surprising if the plays of Shakespeare, when acted by the children of a nation still in its youth, and, above all, youthful in its idealism and enthusiasm, became for these children a school in the humanities?

I say "the plays when acted," for few children or even adults have such keen power of visualization or know any stage well enough that they get the full meaning of a play in reading it. Written to be acted, a play to be fully understood must be seen in at least adequate presentation. Preparing a play for presentation means acquiring intimate knowledge not merely of one's own part, but of the play as a whole. Can you conceive that any such intimate knowledge of a play of Shakespeare does not broaden a youth's knowledge of human beings and deepen his interest in them? Will he not, just because he knows one play so well, desire eagerly to read more of Shakespeare's plays, first those most like the one he has learned to care for, and then the others? If so, here is a youth in his teens well started as a student of Shakespeare. Moreover, can you imagine the boy or girl whom "Richard III.," "King John," or any historical play of Shakespeare, has interested, ceasing his interest when he has exhausted the historical plays of Shakespeare? Will he

Digitized by Google

not go on into other historical reading? A wider and truer interest in people, a well-established love of Shakespeare's work, an interest in history, are not these educative results well worth while?

Moreover, Shakespeare in "Midsummer Night's Dream," and "The Tempest" especially, but constantly in scenes of his other plays, quickens the imagination, or feeds with delightful food the already quickened imagination of the child. At an age when the youth's mind is waking to dreams and imaginings, how better can we fill it than with these pictures of noble men and gentle women living, for the most part, in a world of ideals and beauty. And these quickening visions come at an age when, if the mind is not well filled, it is likely to be badly filled. Here is just where we begin strongly to realize the great aid Shakespeare is, not in annihilating the unattractive, for that we cannot do, but in making the undesirable unattractive.

How, too, can we better combat the lack of imaginative sympathy in many youths, the inability to see a given course of action from any other point of view than their own, than by leading them to understand complex figures entirely outside the range of their experience, yet made comprehensible and sympathetic by the genius of the dramatist? This is just what Shakespeare did for his audiences, what, from week to week, in many languages, he does for audiences the wide world over. He gave English drama psychology in its modern sense, for his plays rest on

Digitized by Google

his subtle knowledge of cause and effect in complicated or unusual experiences. Any boy or girl who has studied one of his plays in the intimate fashion that acting it necessitates has faced the great principle of cause and effect in human conduct and the sources of tragedy. Can he or she wholly forget that in the conduct of life thereafter?

A well-known manager said to me once, "Every time that I put a play of William Shakespeare's on the stage I take off my hat to William; he knew the audience of my theatre so well." That is, Shakespeare, from his long years of self-scrutinizing practice, grasped so firmly the fundamental and eternal principles of exposition, on the stage, for a varying public that to-day his plays are in all the essentials of playwriting a body of practical examples. Now, all this, under proper guidance, must become evident to the young worker as he rehearses. Thus he acquires not only standards for judging plays, but the highest standards.

You have noticed, of course, that if a child is given the best foods, cooked in the best way, he grows selective, and critical of other kinds. Well, it is the same with intellectual food. The child who has lived with a play of Shakespeare's, written after 1595, when he had passed his period of apprenticeship, has tasted of the best in English imaginative, constructive drama. Each play which in his acting he adds to that strengthens and establishes his taste. Nor is it true that with the standards thus gained he cannot judge

Digitized by Google

plays of other kinds, notably modern drama? Some young friends of mine have for some years annually acted one of Shakespeare's plays. All that I have been saying in regard to the advantage of such acting for the children of the Alliance has proved equally true for this group of different origin and opportunities. Their leader, a boy of fifteen at the time, was running over the books of modern drama in my study. "May I read any of these?" he asked. "If you will first let me see what it is." A long pause as I worked and he glanced through volume after volume. At last he said, "I have one here that seems interesting." I looked at it and loaned it. The next day it came back with the message that he had read till he finished it late in the night. "The best play I have found outside Shakespeare's," he sent word. It was "The Servant in the House." Now, whether you and I agree with just the terms of his verdict or not is unimportant; the point remains that from a shelf of varied and interesting plays of different degrees of artistic and moral merit his taste had selected one of the most significant plays of the last ten years. Nor was this effect of acting Shakespeare less evident in other members of the group. Their interest in plays is catholic, but the tawdry, the chaotic, the unreal do not attract them.

Another interesting result of this training is that no child sharing in it can fail to see that the romantic, poetic work of Shakespeare cannot be acted as can a play of every-day modern life. He sees that, written

Digitized by Google

for another time of different beliefs and manners, it requires a different treatment from a picture of life to-day. Away go for him the very foundations of that rigidity in judging art, that singleness of standard, which paralyzes the artistic development of any community.

Of course, I do not maintain that every child gets all of this, or any of it, from acting in Shakespeare's plays. Chance, embodied above all in the "coach," puts emphasis on one or the other of these possible advantages. But certainly under proper guidance the experience may reduce, not increase, self-consciousness, and may destroy rather than increase the glamor of the stage, even while it leans to sound standards for judging plays. It may develop promptness, exactness, co-operation. It supplies safe food for the imagination. It widens and deepens sympathy for human beings of all kinds. Truly, if some or all of these results may be gained, have been gained repeatedly, by children acting Shakespeare's plays, then the product is education, refinement, cultivation, a building up for these children of the humanities.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE MODERN POETIC DRAMA

By Percy MacKaye
Author of "Sappho and Phaon," "Joan of Arc," etc.

Like Professor Baker, my predecessor in this course, I shall take the liberty of construing my subject-title.

3

Digitized by Google

I will construe it to mean: the development of poetry in modern drama; or, how shall the humanities, that is, the humanizing influences of poetry, be made to get into the modern drama?

Poetry itself comes out of the heart of humanity through the imaginations of men. Poetry in the drama comes, therefore, originally out of the audiences. The Elizabethan drama, the Greek drama, were products of the nature of Elizabethan and Greek audiences.

The question is, then, how shall poetry be made to get into audiences, and so into the drama?

In discussing that question we should be discussing poetry in a sense which is germane and significant to every modern man in the street.

Since poetry is a product of the imaginations of men we shall succeed in getting more poetry into audiences—and so into the drama—only by expanding and educating the imaginations of audiences.

How may this be done effectually, systematically, consistently?

May it be done by agencies in the existing theatre itself, or by agencies outside the theatre, or by both?

First, then, in the theatre itself, what distinctive traditions are available to our purpose?

There are, I think, three: the Anglo-Saxon tradidition, the Continental tradition, and the Greek tradition of the theatre. Of these, which is the best adapted to compass the end we are discussing? Let us consider them.

Digitized by Google

Of the three the Anglo-Saxon tradition of the theatre is the tradition which dominates everywhere in America and England to-day. It goes back for its origins to the Puritan Revolution in England. The Anglo-Saxon traditions of to-day in the theatre are not those of the Elizabethan period. Those traditions were broken at the time of Cromwell. When the Puritans interrupted the continuity of the imaginative drama in England they started a new tradition which put the whole art of the theatre outside the pale of civilizing influences. They regarded that art as a force counter to civilization. They despised it and flung it to commercialism to devour or corrupt. Their tradition of the theatre has been more or less modified, but it still actively survives and flourishes.

To sum up the Anglo-Saxon ideal of the theatre, it is a Bohemian ideal, by which theatrical artists, and all those associated with the theatre, are conceived as parasites or hangers-on, more or less corruptive of wholesome society, and unconcerned with constructive, civilizing labor. In brief, it refuses to take account of artists as citizens.

A different tradition of the theatre is the Continental. This had its origins in the courts of Europe, notably in France and Germany: in France, at the time of Louis XIV.; in Germany, at about the time of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller; and it has spread throughout Europe—in Norway, Sweden, Holland, and most of the countries of Europe.

According to this Continental tradition, the art of

Digitized by Google

the theatre has been regarded as one of the most civilizing of influences—a fine art, but a fine art for a segment of society, for a few. That restricted tradition, however, has developed and spread by means of the creative artists it has produced, until to-day it has in Germany become almost identical with a democratic theatre.

To sum up the ideal of the Continental tradition in the theatre, it may be said to be a social ideal, an ideal of "society," meaning by society rather the upper segments of the people than the whole people, but capable of expansion into the larger ideal.

One other tradition remains—the Greek tradition.

Nowadays we are so accustomed to associate the word "Greek" only with universities, with text-books, or with art connoisseurs, that we are likely to dissociate it from any popular idea. Yet the ancient conditions of the Greek theatre were more splendid from a popular point of view than any theatrical conditions which have ever existed. They were conditions wherein the people themselves not only recognized the drama as the chief force of civilization and religion, and actively participated in creating it, but placed it upon its only secure, effectual basis for civic good, that of endowment.

To sum up the Greek ideal of the theatre, it may be characterized as a civic ideal, as distinguished from a "social" ideal or a Bohemian ideal.

We have, then, in the theatre the Bohemian ideal of Anglo-Saxon tradition, the "social" ideal of Con-

Digitized by Google

tinental tradition, and the civic ideal of Greek tradition. According to which of these may we best educate the imaginations of our audiences? I think it is clear—from the nature of our democracy, from the nature of the ideals I have been discussing—that the civic ideal of Greek tradition is best fitted to educate them. In this, however, I speak of a potentiality in the theatre, not an actuality. We might, we should, and I believe we yet will educate the imaginations of Americans according to Greek traditions of the theatre before we get through. But at present that is not an actuality.

As for the Continental tradition in the theatre, that is only beginning to take root in America. It also would be—and will be—a very useful, civilizing factor to compass our end. As yet, however, it can hardly be considered as an actuality.

In the present-day theatre itself, then, the only actualized ideal is the Anglo-Saxon ideal; that exists everywhere in America; it dominates practically all of our theatres. And that ideal we have seen to be uncivilized, the result of Puritan prejudice.

So much for agencies within the theatre itself available or potential to our end. Until the ideals of the Continental or the Greek tradition shall prevail there, it is clear that the existing theatre—although it undoubtedly exerts many sporadic influences for good and beauty and delight—can do nothing systematic, effectual and constructive in educating the imaginations of audiences.

Digitized by Google

What, then, of agencies outside the established theatre? What do we find?

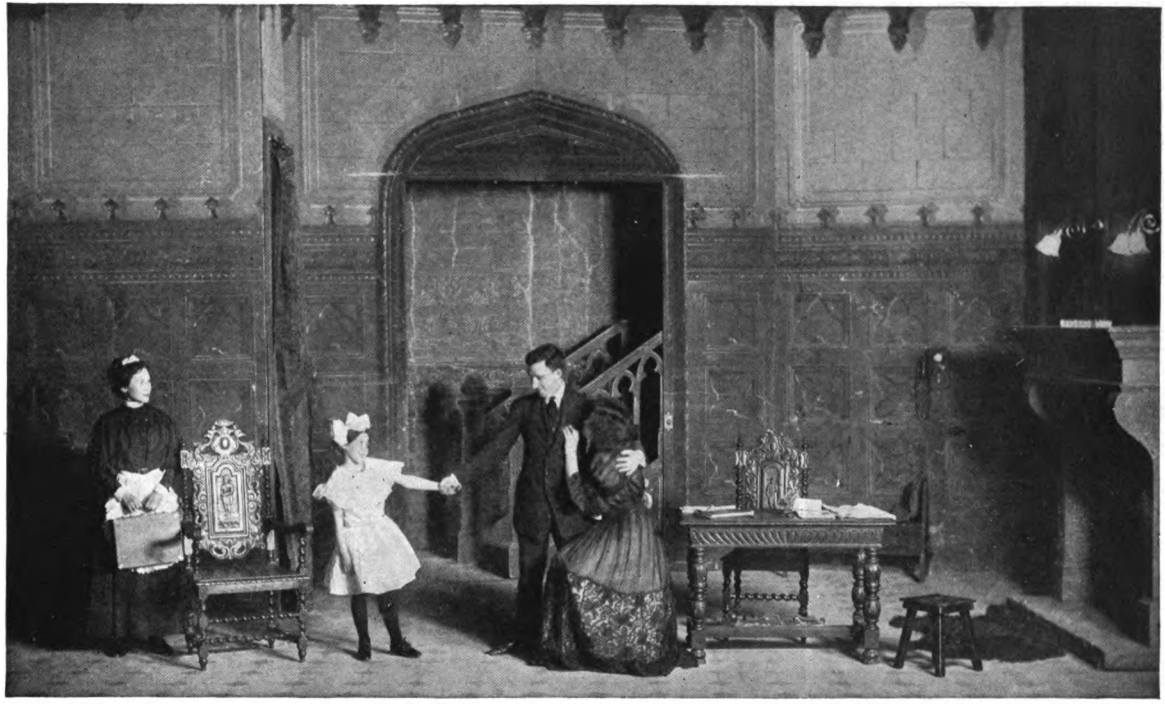
I think we shall find in America only one already organized, effectual agency, specialized in that idea. That is The Educational Theatre for Children and Young People, organized in New York by Miss Herts and her associates.

The Educational Theatre is directly engaged in creating audiences who shall make a higher public demand upon the theatre in general. It goes to the root of the matter I have been discussing. Though distinct, its ideal is directly correlated with the Greek ideal. It goes to the root of the matter because it is engaged in educating the imaginations of men and women at the crucial time of childhood and early youth.

Was there ever a loftier or saner ideal of education than to set out to educate a democracy in poetic insight? It is a courageous, thrilling ideal; it takes one's breath! Yet that is precisely what the Educational Theatre sets out to do, and it sets out to do it systematically, and in two ways: first, to prevent the wanton destruction in childhood of the finest instinct for art and beauty and joy in the nature of man—the dramatic instinct; and, secondly, to nurture, quicken, and develop that instinct itself into a mature faculty, for dealing constructively with all human issues by renovating them with disciplined vitality.

Shall we not consider such a policy of education deeply and to active purpose?

Digitized by Google



"EDITHA'S BURGLAR." (*Produced 1908.*)

MR. WHITMORE: "*I think we don't have to be at all afraid now.*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Look around us: millions of exquisite, imaginative children are yearly poured into our systems of labor and education—potential artists, poets, appreciators of the beautiful. Millions of these are yearly crushed by those systems into dull and levelling callousness, to produce the modern average man—a very unimaginative and therefore uncivilized being.

In all our vast system of national education, one modest struggling institution now sets out to specialize in renovating this average man thus produced—to make him over for good in childhood, by keeping and kindling in him that imagination which makes every normal child the peer of poets.

Is not this policy in education a policy rarely enlightened, vastly courageous, greatly needed?

Why, then, shall we not give it means to become as widespread as it is wise?

The Educational Theatre, although it has exemplified through several years the actual workings and beneficial effects of this principle of education, has not yet received any permanent endowment.

We have seen that the very reason why the established theatre of commerce—itself an enormous influence throughout the nation—is unable to be a constructive, educational force is because it is unendowed. Yet superficial persons have suggested that the children themselves should go forth, and, by their educational theatre work in acting, be depended on to earn the money to create an endowment for their institution. That is just as sensible a suggestion as

Digitized by Google

that the children of the public schools should be depended on to go about and get money to support the public-school system.

No, it is the business of our society itself to see the significance of such a noble policy of education, and to make it effectual by endowing this pioneer Educational Theatre in New York, and a thousand others which its example shall create elsewhere. It is truly a great cause.

Within range of these words there may, or may not be a person rich enough to endow this institution. If there be, I urge him—or her—to endow it. There must be, however, many individuals who know such persons of wealth. If they have not caught the Educational Theatre idea clearly enough from what I have said they ought to look into the theatre further, and bring it to the attention of those who could endow it.

For if this principle of educating a democracy in artistic insight, of keeping alive and educating the imaginations of men, can be put upon a working basis under endowment, if Educational Theatres shall be established not only here in New York, but in Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and all American communities, then shall the humanities, the humanizing influences of art and poetry, be planted deep in the growing place of all drama, ancient and modern—the imaginations of children who never "grow up."

Digitized by Google

XIV

THE DRAMA IN ITS RELATION TO EDUCATION

By James J. Walsh, M.D., PH.D., L.H.D.

Dean and Professor of the History of Medicine and of Nervous Diseases at Fordham University School of Medicine, New York

SINCE Mr. Martin Dooley, of Archey Road, has been talking on the theatre as an educational institution within the last few months it is easy to understand that it would be perfectly impossible for any one else to begin any serious consideration of the subject without a reference to Mr. Dooley. The *London Times*, through the mouth of one of its book reviewers, said not long ago that the wisest man who writes English in our day writes under the name of Dooley. When "The Thunderer" thus bows to something that comes from America, and, above all, that smacks so much of Irish, then surely must the rest of us look up and take notice. Besides, Mr. Dooley has proved himself an authority on educational matters on other subjects. Did any one ever give a better characterization or a more dramatic presentation of the elective system than when Mr. Dooley some years ago represented the president of a great university as waiting to receive the freshman at the gate and

Digitized by Google

ask him, "And now, what would you like to have our professors study for you?" Did any one ever sum up education better than when he said, as the sting in the tail of that same article, "You may bring a young man to the university, but you can't make him think"?

Without more ado, then, I may quote Dooley on the theatre as an educational institution with the preliminary word of explanation that the sage of Archey Road has been discussing the question of the reform of the theatre as it has been bruited about in our newspapers, and that he, too, has a word to say on that subject; and, needless to add, that word is original and adds somewhat to the gaiety of nations. "Sthrange to say, both sides admit that th' theaytre is an idjacational institution. I never thought iv it that way. I always supposed that people wint to th' theaytre because they had no comfortable homes to go to, or to f'rgit th' dishes weren't washed, or to laugh or cry or have a good spell iv coughing where it wud atthract attintion. But it seems I was wrong. Th' theaytre is intinded to be more like a night-school thin a circus. It's a good thing f'r th' theaytres that th' people that go to them don't know this. If they felt they were bein' idjacated whin they thought they were neglectin' their minds they'd mob the box-office to get their money back. Anny recollection they have iv idjacation is clouded with sorrow."

Since I am about to talk about the relation of the

Digitized by Google

drama to education, perhaps it may be as well, then, to plead for your silence with regard to whatever I have to say. Do not tell it abroad. Tell it not in Gath, whisper it not in Ascalon. Let us have it among ourselves. Don't let the general public imagine that we want to educate them by means of the drama. We are engaged in the work of the Educational Theatre, but that is not at all with the purpose of lessening the pleasure of mankind in the stage, but, on the contrary, of adding to it. It is true that until the child or the savage is taught better things he is quite satisfied with the simpler pleasures that appeal only to the surface of his intellect, but once he is taught to like things that go deeper he has no doubt at all that he has added to his capacity for pleasure. Our Educational Theatre, nor these lectures, meant to help to a realization of its purpose, are at all intended to make the theatre a school, nor to lessen its delights, but, on the contrary, to add greatly to them. If you want to be sure of that you need only come down to any of the performances of the Educational Theatre and see how much of delight audiences *and actors* get out of the performances.

Very probably the best way to realize the place of the drama in education is to trace its history. Twice in the history of dramatic literature as we know it the drama has developed anew out of religious ceremonials and teachings. The theatre has departed so far from any ideal of this kind that this is rather hard even to imagine now. The presence of any religious

Digitized by Google

element in the drama could scarcely be suspected from the performances that one finds on Broadway at the present moment, or in the principal theatres of any great city of the world. There are exceptions, of course, in which great moral lessons are taught and even religious principles inculcated. They are, however, quite rare enough, so that every one, I think, even the most ardent advocates of the theatre, would concede that they are the exceptions that prove the rule, that the theatre no longer has any religious tendencies or affiliations. Twice in its origin, however, the drama has been eminently educational from a religious standpoint and has been deliberately used to successful purpose, not alone in conveying information which, after all, is a very small part of education, but in impressing lessons and in bringing home the great moral truths and ethical lessons in such a way as to make them of value in training character, which must ever be the main purpose of education.

In the old days of Athens the drama was performed on certain religious festivals, and the story acted was always some portion of their old legends relating to the special religious observance. In the old days of the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ the dramatic performances of Athens were scarcely more at first than a retelling of some one of the mythological stories with a certain amount of action added so as to hold the attention. Gradually this developed into the great classic drama. At the height of the evolution of this, however, the religious element always

Digitized by Google

remained notable in it and the educational purpose of the drama was very marked. So well was this appreciated that the theatre was provided by the State just as the temples of the gods were built, and the support of both institutions was a public duty willingly assumed. It only needs a very little reflection on the subjects chosen and their dramatic development by the three great ancient dramatists—Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—to appreciate all this very thoroughly. The subjects of their dramas were chosen from the legendary lore connected with the relations of gods and men, and though they were developed so as to bring out human action and the place of human character they always retained their religious educational aspect.

"Prometheus," probably the greatest tragedy ever written, is intimately connected with the oldest traditions that concern the origin of man and his destiny, as well as the place of evil in the world. The very word Prometheus is not Greek, but comes from the Sanscrit *promythyas*, which means fire-bearer, and apparently demonstrates that the legend came originally from the oldest branch of the Aryan stock. There has always been the feeling that Æschylus, born himself at Eleusis and conversant with the Eleusinian mysteries, used certain of the exoteric portions at least of these great traditions of his native city as the groundwork of this great play. Sophocles's plays are more human and more concerned with man apart from the gods, and yet it is not difficult to trace their

Digitized by Google

definite purpose of education in reference to old religious ideas.

How supremely educational were the Greek plays may be judged very well from the story of Antigone as Sophocles developed it. We know her as the young woman of eighteen who, hearing that her brother's body was to be left unburied, to be devoured by the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, chose to risk the danger of violating the king's edict which threatened death to any one who should bury it in order to give it funeral rites. She is discovered, as she knew she would be, and suffers the death penalty with equanimity, calmly proclaiming that she preferred to obey—

"The unwritten laws of God that know not change.
They are not of to-day or yesterday,
But live forever, nor can man assign
When first they sprang to being. Not through fear
Of any man's resolve was I prepared
Before the Gods to bear the penalty
Of sinning against these."

This great conscience-speech of Antigone, so reminiscent of the mercy speech of Portia, both of them put by great dramatists into the mouths of young women, is, like it, a striking index of the educational value of the drama.

Antigone's self-sacrifice had been led up to by years of fulfilment of duty as she saw it. She might have stayed in the palace of her uncle, the king, in Thebes, and been brought up in ease and luxury as a princess,

Digitized by Google

but she preferred to wander with her blind father, caring for him, acting as intermediary between the quarrelling members of the family, fulfilling all the sisterly duties that so often have become incumbent on daughters and sisters, but thus preparing for the supreme sacrifice that made her worthy to be the immortal heroine of one of the greatest of tragedies.

When the drama arose again, at the end of the Middle Ages, once more it had its origin in religious ceremonials and celebrations on festival days. Its materials were the stories of the Old and the New Testament worked up into dramatic form. Curiously enough, just as in the old days, the actors, as Horace tells us, had their performances on moving carts, so, too, in the Middle Ages the scene was set on a wagon which was carried past the populace as it gathered along the road and the drama was acted over and over again for the benefit of succeeding crowds. These mystery plays took a deep hold upon the people and formed an integral portion of the education of the time. It is easy to think that such performances must have been crude and ineffective, and, indeed, that they must have failed to affect people to any great degree, especially after being frequently repeated. To those who may be inclined to think this, Oberammergau needs to be recalled. In a little village in the Austrian Tyrol we have one of these mystery plays acted by the inhabitants of a little village of less than fifteen hundred inhabitants, and yet all the world flocks to see it on occasion, and the sincerity of the actors and the

Digitized by Google

charming simplicity of the presentation make one of the greatest pleasures that a lover of the drama can have.

When I was at Oberammergau, twelve years ago, six thousand people crowded in all day Monday to listen to the sacred drama; there had been as many or more even the day before; there were to be nearly as many on Tuesday. The play is meant traditionally to be given only on Sunday, and is not repeated on Monday unless there are many who have come from a distance to see it. All during that season triple performances were the rule, and with me were people from North America, from South America, from nearly every country in Europe, and even from distant Australia. These villagers succeed in giving a marvellous presentation of the old story. The play itself has reacted on the village, and it is a pleasure to know the villagers. They may not be well informed in all the doings of the great world, but they are educated in the best sense of the word, for they know values in life and they know how to think for themselves, and they do so.

Here is disclosed, so that one may study it close up, the secret of the wonderful educational influence of the mediæval mystery plays. They were not played by hired performers, but by the people themselves. Long months of preparation were given, and most of the people of the village would in some way be connected with the set of mystery plays to be given in the early spring-time each year. During the long

Digitized by Google

winter evenings, much longer, it must be remembered, in England than in this country, for New York is in the latitude of Naples, and England is much nearer the latitude of Labrador, the people were occupied with the beautiful stories of the Old Testament, the delightful parables of the New. They could not read nor write, and knowing the abominations that come from reading in our time, one is very much inclined to thank God that they could not read generally. They were educated, however, for they are the people who made the beautiful cathedrals, the wonderful stained glass, the fine precious metal-work, the surpassing needlework, the wondrous wood and iron-work of the old cathedrals. We would like to have a few of the trained artisans that these mediæval villages possessed in such profusion.

All during the long winter evenings these people were occupied mainly with the preparation for their play. Some of the deepest thoughts, some of the choicest words, of the old Scriptures were in their minds and mouths during this time. There can be no better education than intimate contact with great thoughts adequately expressed. Nowhere do you find these so available as in the Scriptures. In our time the ideal of education seems to be *non multum sed multa*, not much, but many things; that is why we hear so many complaints of education. Our great men have usually had a few books, at most half a dozen, but those of the choicest, and above all and nearly always, the Bible. We flood our children with

Digitized by Google

trivial books, and they read so many of them that it is no wonder that they know very little. Old Dr. Parry said, "You have read much, you have thought little, you know nothing." A new definition for a fool, I believe, is that "he is a man who has read everything and remembers it all." I suppose that the best short term for a fool is one who never has a thought of his own; if by any chance a man could read everything and remember it all he would not be able to have a thought of his own and so would fulfil the definition.

It was this personal intimate contact with the great thoughts and expressions of the past that made the drama even in the earliest times so eminently educational. It was the same thing that made the Greek drama so important as an educational factor. We are interested now in the story that the drama tells. Art seems to draw half its interest from the story that it tells. The Greeks and the medieval audiences always knew all about the story. They were interested in the characters. Shakespeare never invented a plot. He would not be bothered with doing it, but there is no doubt about the effectiveness of his drama.

My own college experience served to show me how much of educational value there is in dramatic performances, especially of classical plays. I was at Fordham, and it is the custom at Jesuit Colleges, a custom due to formal regulations in the matter in the *Ratio Studiorum*, the Jesuit manual of studies,

Digitized by Google

to have a series of plays given by the students every year. We used to have five each year in my time, and so during the course of six years I took part in some twenty-five plays. Altogether this included six plays of Shakespeare and such old comedies as "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," "The Heir at Law," "The Ticket-of-Leave Man," "Guy Mannering," and "Rob Roy" dramatized, and a number of less well-known old farces and comedies. In most of these old plays there were probably a dozen of men on the stage who, by the end of our rehearsals, as far as memory went, at least, could readily have taken almost any of the parts because of the familiarity with the text acquired from frequent repetition of it.

There was no special course in dramatic literature announced in the Fordham College catalogue of those days, and I was no little surprised to find later on in life that, quite unconsciously and without any question of examinations in the matter of notes or credits for it, we had received an excellent course in this subject. We probably would not have been able to answer many examination questions in the erudition of the plays and were ignorant of much useless information with regard to the author. We did know the literary product itself and had had opportunities given us to compare the old and the new and classic with modern authors. There are some of us who are interested in education who are inclined to think that it is exactly the education which cannot be measured by examination papers and somehow makes

Digitized by Google

students think for themselves that means most for genuine education.

There are two reasons given for the regulation with regard to the annual production of plays at Jesuit colleges. One of these is, of course, the educational value of the literary training and the exercise of memory and of expression that is thus cultivated. Another and scarcely less important reason is that during the winter season particularly, when on many days exercise out-of-doors may be impossible, the more active students' minds are occupied with preparations for the plays, and thus are kept from many bothersome, mischievous activities. It is recognized that students must have something else to think about besides their studies in order to afford them relief and relaxation, and the something else is deliberately provided in the shape of preparation for and the actual performance of plays. The better the play the more valuable it is as an adjunct for school-life in every way.

These are exactly the reasons why the Educational Theatre movement will be of service among the working classes of our cities. For hygiene of mind and ethics' sake they must have occupation of mind apart from their work and such diversion as will give them an opportunity to get away from the humdrum daily round of life. This is afforded by the rehearsals and performances of good plays, and their intimate contact with the great thoughts and expressions of the master-minds of dramatic literature is eminently

Digitized by Google

educational. Two great purposes, social and intellectual, are thus accomplished. The wisdom of the old Jesuit teachers foresaw the necessity of such interludes for their students, and appreciated their value so much that the having of them was required by formal regulation. When the value of the Educational Theatre is better appreciated it might not be too much to expect formal municipal regulations of the same tenor that would have as excellent effect as my own memory of college dramatics makes me realize came from our dramatic performances, though they were entered into not at all as a new mode of intellectual work, but as a recreation for ourselves that would provide on the occasion of the performances diversion of mind for many others.

The Educational Theatre then represents a definite attempt to get back to some of the old-time methods by which people were brought intimately in contact, not merely for the passing hour of the performance, but for long before, with the thoughts and expressions of great writers. When these great writers embody great principles that are illustrated by the action, then character is formed and precious training occurs all unconsciously. Most of the best influence over us is unconscious rather than conscious. There is a training of the heart as well as of the mind. Instead of devotion to the drama then being a waste of time it takes young folks away from the trivial occupations and the still more trivial reading that would otherwise occupy them, to employ them in trying to understand

Digitized by Google

and to express as far as they can the meaning of great thoughts. Here is the exemplification in our time of how the drama may be used in an educational way. We are harking back to the older period of dramatic history, but only because that represents an important phase of human history in which education without our methods and systems was accomplished so that apparently a great many more people in proportion to the whole population were made to think for themselves and had their tastes and their minds developed than we succeed in reaching by more strenuous educational modes. It is this lesson of the educational theatre that deserves the attention of all those seriously interested in education.

Digitized by Google

XV

A brief suggestion of what the endowed Educational Theatre will accomplish.

WHEN our scant treasury and lack of rehearsal facilities forbade any new productions, we continued class work with senior and junior speech and action classes, studying several plays, although we realized that mere study and critical discussion of the text of plays was not our reason for existence. We were unwilling to run into debt to produce plays or to pay our teachers, so the work was closed in August, 1909, having fulfilled all the obligations undertaken during its existence.

Its liabilities were *nil*. Its assets included all its play manuscripts and parts—several costumes and some scenery—and most of all the accumulated experience of its workers and their earnest desire to carry the work forward. Their bread has been scattered upon the waters; may it please Providence that it return while the waters of the Nile still irrigate this fertile soil.

Two years have passed since the work of play-producing by the Educational Theatre ceased. The foregoing chapters are a brief history of its achievement.

It is not only suitable but imperative that a brief

Digitized by Google

prophecy follow this history and place the warning sign-post at the next turn of this broad educational high-road, for the pioneers who ardently hope for its widening and expansion fully to realize the added responsibilities which the development of the movement would necessarily bring.

Before indicating the road of further service, I will, in few unhalting steps, now retrace the path already travelled; for it has been my unique opportunity to see this path illumined by a brilliant search-light thrown from a great distance. This light has made very plain the meaning of the handwriting on the wall, which might never have been so clearly disclosed at close range, when the many details in the interesting machinery of play-producing were at times dazzling. A providential illness and necessary absence from work has provided the clearer vision which distance so frequently affords.

This vision shows that what *was* done to meet a great and constantly increasing need forms but the nucleus of what is destined to become a national educational movement. Such being the case, it is necessary to consider whether this movement had best be attached to our public-school system and thus supported by the State or whether its far-reaching influence for good should at present depend upon private endowment.

My experience favors private endowment, since the vitality of Children's Educational Theatres depends upon life forces which could not, under present con-

Digitized by Google

ditions, pulsate through the arteries of our school system, and for the following reasons:

Classes in Children's Educational Theatres should always be co-educational in order that all the social and recreative activities which the production of a play engenders may be made a means of training in co-operation and of placing the sexes, from the beginning, on a basis of human relationship which reflects the life of both sexes, since the drama, like life, is a co-educational affair.

Entrance to the classes of Educational Theatres should not be compulsory but elective, because the chief asset of an Educational Theatre is the great unregulated surge of desire which animates its students inducing them to regulated, constructive activity. Anything which tends to weaken this desire by relating it directly to compulsory education, by making the playing a duty rather than a pleasure, will weaken the educator's influence in the direction in which his reach is farthest and his hold strongest—through youth's natural craving for recreation.

While the Children's Educational Theatre, from the *player's* side, should not be directly connected with the school system, it should have direct connection through regular conferences of the teachers of both institutions, since we know that the slow, inhibitive child who fails to respond to the methods employed in the large classes of public schools will, through the proper personal direction and control of dramatic instinct, be stirred to responsiveness and thus helped

Digitized by Google

in school work. The methods employed in Educational Theatre classes have been used in schools with excellent results.

From the *audience* side, Children's Educational Theatres should be directly connected with the school system, producing such classics as are studied in the schools. The directors of Educational Theatres should be in close touch with the teachers of English and literature in schools, and no child should be examined in any play until he has seen the play performed. Tickets for such performances should be distributed by school principals just as cards were distributed in the schools during the six years' operation of the Children's Theatre.

The cost of Educational Theatre buildings and maintenance will naturally vary according to location and structure, but gradual development of this movement is always advisable, for the right director is far more imperative than the proper building and equipment.

While desire is the sole requisite for entrance to pupils' classes in an Educational Theatre, it is not by any means the unique requirement for teachers and directors in such institutions. If the pure, spontaneous, dramatic instinct of youth is used by untrained directors for the manufacture of Children's Theatres the new application of the educational principle, still in its infancy, will be grievously retarded.

A vital branch of the first Educational Theatre still to be established with endowment, is a training-

Digitized by Google

"'OP-O'-ME-THUMB." (*Produced 1908.*)
AMANDA AFFLICK: "*Give it 'ere.*"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

school for teachers in the theory and practice of play-producing as developed in the work of The Children's Educational Theatre during seven years, through the relation of dramatic instinct to character development. A building and subsidy, no matter how costly and suitable, would be valueless without trained teachers and expert play-producers with a full comprehensive knowledge of the right theory and practice of the work.

The director of a Children's Educational Theatre, if he or she be not actually a dramatic author, should know how to reconstruct play manuscripts or, at least, to suggest to authors suitable changes; he should have some knowledge of every department of play-producing, and should also have a complete understanding of the difference between stimulating dramatic talent for professional stage results and developing dramatic instinct for harmonious life results.

The director of an Educational Theatre should also be capable of directing the training of large numbers of people for pageants and plays for the celebration of every national holiday. This is an important branch of the civic Educational Theatre work in any place.

If the foregoing order seems rather a large one, let not the man or woman keenly desirous of entering this new and affording field of educational endeavor be discouraged, for with patience, ingenuity, and intelligence these things can all be learned, and they *must* be learned by those wishing to do this work.

Digitized by Google

The ordinary young teacher, using his or her profession as a makeshift, is valueless in Educational Theatre work.

The Educational Theatre represents a great opportunity and a correspondingly greater responsibility than in academic processes, where activity must be artificially produced.

The first Children's Educational Theatre, with its training classes for teachers, should be housed in a building which should contain a theatre with a seating-capacity of one thousand; a rehearsal hall with a stage for its orchestra classes, its classes in interpretative dancing, and for all its social functions, such as parents' meetings, lectures and readings by experts in literary, dramatic, and civic affairs; ten class-rooms for its classes in diction and action; offices; a wardrobe-room for its costumes; a property-room for its furniture and properties; a storage-room for its scenery. The cost of such a building in New York would be about one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. The cost of the land would depend entirely upon location.

The demand for plays suitable for the young which the establishment of the movement will create will be met. People who are now writing children's books will naturally turn their imaginative faculties to writing children's plays when the need for such exists. The seven years' work thus far accomplished has already brought forth a number of plays suitable for the young.

Digitized by Google

To lift the theatre out of the conventional groove of mere amusement and make it the medium of representing the world and humanity as it moves through interesting vital epochs, pageants will be written for national holidays. Many open-air productions of such should be given.

Bible plays will be written, which the unpaid players will perform with unique sincerity and appealing simplicity, for the theatre should ever be the handmaid of religion. It should be among the most beneficent forms of activity, for it can appeal with mighty power to reason and conscience, can stir up the deepest emotions, the loftiest aspirations, holding the attention with wonder and delight, for miracles and mysteries are of to-day, as well as of time gone by. We may have a revival of religious life through the righteous use of the drama.

With the establishment of the first Children's Educational Theatre the movement would extend primarily, I believe, to our larger cities. It might be advisable in some cities to connect the theatres with settlements already established. In Chicago Miss Addams has found the Hull House Theatre a source of uplift and stimulus to neighbors and friends, old and young.

The people of Newark, New Jersey, express the need of the vitalizing influence of an Educational Theatre to counteract the deadening results of the grind of factory and mill. Boston, St. Louis, and Los Angeles express a like desire.

Digitized by Google

When teachers can be developed in the central theatre the movement will reach out to small country towns, where the long winter evenings will be spent by young men and women willing to devote much time to the study of plays when the object of such study looks toward worthy production.

Instead of swapping stories at the corner grocery, the village swain can readily be interested, by a clever teacher, to use his dramatic instinct to worthier purposes, and the village maiden who now stops the curfew bell or searches for the slain on parlor carpets, will have ideals of life implanted through the study of noble characters. The elders will work tirelessly to prepare costumes and make properties and scenery, for the interest of "their play" will have power to hold all classes of village inhabitants, such is the power of dramatic instinct intelligently developed. Educational Theatres will be powerful agencies for good in small towns and villages because they will be practical means of providing youth at home with active entertainment, the desire for which frequently brings unsophisticated young people to large cities unprepared to meet the problems which confront them.

Thus for old and young, rich and poor, dull and clever, regardless of creed, sect, or color, will the Educational Theatre, properly developed, be a great educational asset throughout our country—a citizen-making institution, implanting ideals of true democracy.

Digitized by Google

It will be a true civic force since it will evolve from the people and be a part of the life of the community. It will not be grafted upon the community from without and so remain nothing higher than a mere agency for amusement. The impulse toward this creative form of education is expressed in popular desire; it is one of those precious and lasting manifestations which time cannot wither nor custom stale.

Youth's desire to see and play the acted story is a spontaneous effort to make material of thought, to construct an operative image, and through its use is found new power of capacity in the human soul. This desire must be used as material for moral progress, not shoved aside as impedimenta. The suppression of this desire or the turning of it to base ends means the abortion of a new birth such as is constantly germinating in every robust soul.

All thoughtful philanthropists should try to find agencies to reduce the number of alleviating charities, since no movement which does not stimulate people to help themselves is of any permanent value.

The Children's Educational Theatre, training the imagination of youth through purposeful play, will lessen the percentage of crime and augment the number of self-reliant, altruistic citizens.

The endowed Children's Educational Theatre will bear a high percentage of interest to its promoter.

THE END

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

3 2044 014 576 821

THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

WIDENER
BOOK DUE
JAN FEB 9 1982
7342807

CANCELLED
JUN 26 1992
MAY 29 1992

WIDENER
APR 08 2006
JAN 18 2006
CANCELLED
BOOK DUE

WIDENER
APR 08 2006
JAN 18 2006
CANCELLED
AUG 03 2005
BOOK DUE

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google